The WHITE CAT

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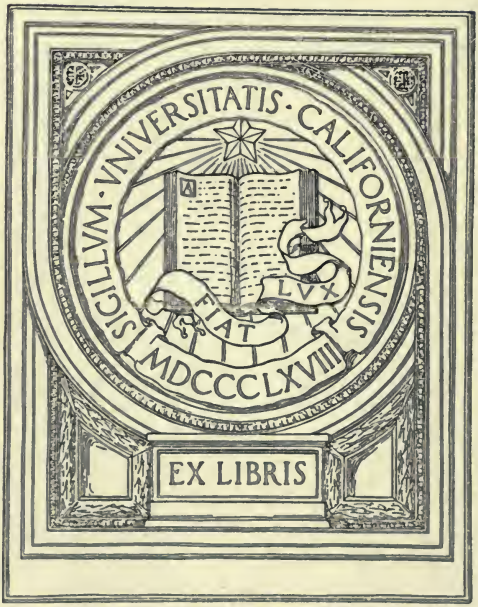

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"Chester," she cried, "take me." *Page 313*

THE WHITE CAT

By

GELETT BURGESS

Author of Vivette
A Little Sister of Destiny
etc.

With Illustrations by

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THE WHITE CAT

I

I came to myself with a disturbing sense that something was wrong with me. My discomfort, increasing steadily, resolved itself into two distinct factors—a pain in my side at every breath and a throbbing ache in the top of my head. I realized that I was in bed, and the first strangeness of it struck me. I could not account for it. The wild, spicy odor of flowers came to me, adding to my perplexity. Then I opened my eyes.

The place was so dimly lighted that for some seconds my sluggish wits were unable to interpret the blotches of shadow and the vague glimmering spots. These, however, gradually resolved themselves into comprehensible forms. I perceived that I was in a strange room, large and airy; for even in

the obscurity I got a feeling of free, clean space, and of that chaste emptiness which is apt to distinguish the guest-chamber of a well-kept house. I heard, now, the steady, deliberate ticking of a clock a little way off, and somewhere below was a small grinding sound, so low as to be almost a mere vibration, like a coffee-mill in operation. Near by, a door closed and latched softly.

I moved and attempted to sit up, but a sharp stab in my side warned me that my hurt was perhaps more serious than I had thought. There was a lump on my head, too, which probably accounted for my lapse of consciousness.

Setting my memory painfully to work, groping back through the darkness of my mind for something to explain the mystery, much as one might descend a dark, unlighted stairway, I came upon the last fact that had been recorded by my brain. I had been putting on speed—the road through the woods was straight, level and deserted—hoping to get up to town early in the afternoon. The

steering-gear of my motor-car had given way. I had felt the wheels suddenly veer, then, before I put on my brake, the front of the car went down and the rear was thrown up and over with the momentum, sending me flying through the air.

I wondered, lazily, how much the machine had suffered. Then, I must have dropped off to sleep again, for when I next opened my eyes there was a flickering ray of light in the room. This time I was keenly alert mentally, desirous of some explanation of my situation. Where was I, and who had cared for me?

The light grew brighter, still wavering, slanting across the wall where it rocked and shifted, casting long, distorted shadows that danced up and down. Some one was evidently coming up-stairs with a light. The door was hidden by a projecting angle of the wall, however, and so for a few moments I saw nobody.

In those seconds the room was illuminated gradually more and more, showing a white-

painted wainscot with a dull green wall above, where a few Japanese prints hung. Opposite my bed was a window with small, old-fashioned panes; there was another beside me. The rays glinted on the polished sides of several pieces of old mahogany furniture and flared yellow on brass candlesticks and on the gilded frame of an eagle mirror. Finally the glare stopped its undulating, the shadows grew steadier on the wall, and, as I gazed eagerly for a first glimpse of my visitor, a young woman, bearing a silver candlestick, came into the room.

She looked immediately over to where I lay, and then, catching my surprised stare, her expression changed wonderfully from a rather pathetic abstraction to an animated interest. With something not quite a smile on her face she walked nearer my bed, and stood for a moment without speaking, still looking at me. Her attitude hinted that she saw in me something—as if, for instance, it were a sort of picturesqueness which was unexpected enough to appeal to her imagina-

tion. She rested for a moment, poised and calm, but intensely attentive, fascinated.

And I, at the same time, was instantly conscious of so curious a sentiment that I must stop to attempt to describe it.

I conceived myself to be a connoisseur in women, and I estimated her at first sight as one unique, even extraordinary. But though to my mind she was indubitably beautiful, it was not her beauty that for the moment thrilled me. It was chiefly her "newness," the very novelty of her visitation. I felt a sudden, compelling desire to prolong the mystery of her presence rather than to have it explained. I tried, mentally, to delay her first word, to hold her back from any definite explanation till my eyes had had their fill of her—till they had, so to speak, solved her equation—till my wonder had spent itself in the vision, exhausting all its possibilities of delight. Her charm was, in its unexpectedness, so alluring, that she was like a pleasant dream which one lingers with and detains.

She was small, but her head was so exquisitely proportioned to her body that one did not notice her size. I have called her young, though she was twenty-seven, for her graceful figure and pose were still girlishly maintained. The shape of her small head was defined by a quaint coiffure, the dark, fine hair being banded in an encircling plait up past her tiny ears and over, like a coronal, showing a sweeping high-bred curve over her low brow. All this gave her a tender, virginal aspect; but her soft, deep brown eyes were so saddened by warm shadows below the lids, her mouth was so tremulously sensitive, with its slightly parted lips, and the little lines that women fear had begun to write her history so suggestively upon her face, that, as I gazed at her, I saw a woman who had lived and suffered, a woman as intense as she was delicate in all her moods.

She was clad in a bewilderingly feminine peignoir of lace and embroidery, open at the neck, and covered with another long, straightly hanging garment of shimmering

pale-green silk, richly decorated with odd patterns. This gave her to my wondering eyes quite the appearance of a medieval princess, or the heroine of some old fairy tale. The impression was intensified by the long chain she wore, set with fire opals which flashed in the candle-light. From it, below her waist, there hung a golden star.

And, strangest of all, most provocative to my fancy, she also appeared, with extraordinary sympathy, almost with prescience, to feel something of my wonder as she paused and stood silent, retarding her greeting, in answer to my unspoken thought. While our eyes held each other in that marvelous communion, she did not smile; it was rather from her quivering mouth that I got the idea that she, too, was touched by the spell, and was keenly alive to the potentiality of the situation. She seemed to hold her breath lest the wonder should pass too soon.

That moment was as sublimely unreal as anything I have ever known, and, within its unmeasurable limits, as potent. It was tense,

instinct with fine, secret emotions too faint for analysis. Messages came and went, electric. It was, in short, the psychological moment that comes but once to any friendship, and, coming, is usually hurried past without appreciation of its mysterious charm. It was that most suggestive of preludes, an instinctive, conscious pause upon the magic threshold of Romance. That she felt its quality also overpowered me. The minute passed like a falling star, and in its glory we seemed to travel miles together.

Then, with a visible effort, she spoke.

Her voice was light and clear, so expressively modulated that I have, despite myself, to compare it only to fairy footsteps passing over flower-tops. Its tones poised and hovered as if on the wing, though they were as sure as the melody of an old song. It was, above all else, graceful, and usually it held a trace of mental eagerness, but its characteristic quality came more from delicate nuances of feeling than from any vibrant intensity. It had the fluidity of running water.

With her first word she smiled, and some of the melancholy escaped from her eyes.

"Oh, you are better now! I'm *so* glad!"

The silver thread of magic that had bound us was broken, and the episode became real and humorous on the instant. I could not help smiling in my turn, for assuredly, from my point of view, I was, physically, decidedly the worse. I took it from her, by her remark, that I had been ill.

"Yes," I replied, "I suppose I must be better, since you say so, but I seem to be quite bad enough. How long have I been here?"

"Twenty-four hours. You have been a little delirious, you know. I was getting quite anxious about you, though the doctor said there was no danger."

She came nearer, and put her small beautiful hand upon my cheek. I noticed that she wore no rings. The touch of her fingers was soft and cool.

"I'm glad your fever has gone," she said. "Have you much pain?"

I felt sore all over, and there was trouble with my side when I moved; my head seemed to be splitting. But I was so much more interested in her, and how I came to be there, that I dismissed my symptoms with a shrug, and asked what had happened.

"You were thrown from your automobile," she said, "and you were pretty badly shaken up. There was a rib broken, and a slight concussion of the brain, I believe, but nothing serious. You'll have to stay here several days, at least, and keep quiet. Doctor Copin had to go back to town, and I must notify him that you are all right now. You mustn't fret about it, for you are perfectly welcome to stay here and it won't trouble us in the least. Only I'm afraid you'll be terribly bored. It's quiet here, and I'll be rather dull company."

"I'm not worrying, I assure you," I said. "I'm in no hurry to get well."

She smiled again, faintly but with a quick appreciation, and took a seat in an arm-chair which stood beside my bed. I caught a

glimpse of a green silk stocking and an exquisitely small foot in a fantastically shaped slipper. She went on:

"I have been a good deal troubled because we have, of course, no idea who you are. I was afraid that some of your friends might be alarmed about you. So, if there is any one we can notify, or send for, give me the address and the message, and I'll send it over to the telegraph office at the Harbor, or I can telephone for you, if there's any one in town. Doctor Copin could call and explain your condition, if you prefer."

As she leaned her face on her slender hand and looked at me, she added: "Your motor has been taken care of, so you needn't worry about that. Uncle Jerdon hauled it into the stable, and it can stay there until you have a chance to have it repaired."

"You were good to take me in and to get a doctor," I said, watching the tiny vertical lines come and go in her forehead.

"Oh, Doctor Copin happened to be with me when you were brought in by Uncle

Jerdon. I really don't know how you managed to escape with your life."

"I didn't deserve to escape. I was running considerably over the speed limit, I imagine. I wanted to get back to town early." How much rather would I have discussed the queer little corners of her lips that changed so distractingly, and the transparent shadow under her cheek-bone that spiritualized her whole expression now and again!

"Oh, I must take your message!" she exclaimed, a little embarrassed by the pause that had fallen.

She rose and went over to an antique secretary, bringing back a pad of paper and a pencil. Reseating herself, she waited for me to dictate. I thought a while and then gave her a short report of my condition to be sent to my partner. Having written this down she went out of the room quietly, leaving the candle with me. No sooner had she left than my pain returned. For the time I had forgotten all about it.

In spite of this, the thought of her filled me with a restful peace. I didn't in the least want to know who she was, so long as I might see her, and hear her talk to me in that smooth, melodious, eager voice, whose sound had established her convincingly as a lady of rare promise. The prospect of having to spend several days in her society, or at least near her, was as pleasant a thought as I could well imagine. The fruit of our moment was a mystery, rich and fragrant, which I wished only not to destroy. I found myself trying, in her absence, to recall each feature of her face, her poses, and her hands so keenly alive and full of graceful gesture. That I did not wonder who she was—what was her name, her situation, her history—came, perhaps, from the state of bodily weakness in which my accident had left me, but it seemed to me then that it was not merely the passivity of my physical state; it was an epicurean joy I took in tasting my impressions drop by drop.

Meanwhile, as I thought it all over, my eyes wandered over that part of the room

visible in the candle-light, from the four-posted bed in which I lay, and almost unconsciously I noted the many evidences of taste and wealth. The furniture was all of antique style, undoubtedly genuine specimens of the best designs of the later colonial period.

The Japanese prints were the only pictures visible that I could see. They seemed like Utamaro's and Hiroshige's mostly, though near by were a couple of Yoshitora's and Toyokuni's brilliant actresses, veritable riots of color against the dull green of the wall. The floor was of oak parquetry, covered with Persian rugs of what I knew to be rare weaves. Altogether, the room had, in its severe formal way, the dignity of a museum.

She came back, after about ten minutes, with a tray of toast and tea, a jar of Bar-le-duc, and the most appetizing of lamb chops.

"Do you feel hungry?" she asked, setting the tray down upon a stand at the head of the bed.

As I assented most heartily, she leaned over and propped the pillows up behind my back, and then set the silver salver before me on the spread. Drawing up her chair, she sat down near enough to pour the tea and hand me what else I required. As she did so I noted the delicate way she held everything she touched—her fingers slightly parted naturally, curling like an acanthus leaf.

"You say that I have been out of my head?" I began.

"Yes, at intervals, since yesterday afternoon."

"I dimly remember it, now. Yes, it was curious. Somehow, though, it seems to me that there were two women here, though never at the same time, I think—but no doubt I got it all mixed up."

She looked down quickly, as if confused, but she replied, "Oh, it must have been Leah, — the other one. She's my maid; or, perhaps, rather more my companion. You must see her. I think she's wonderful. I wonder if *you* will!" She made the last remark

under her breath, as if she spoke to herself rather than to me.

She went to the door and called, "Leah!" So few persons can raise their voices prettily, that I was delighted to hear it sound as musical as when she spoke to me. As she returned, the light shone on her soft-flowing, silken gown, making it look like frosted silver. In a few moments Leah entered the room, bearing a lighted lamp.

I was surprised, I confess, after what my hostess had said, perhaps as a test of my sensibility, to see that the maid was a negress, but, after giving her my first glance, I was still more surprised to see that she was of a kind one seldom sees, the best type, in fact, of Northern negro. As she approached us she had the bearing of a woman of great refinement and a face which, though uncompromisingly dark, showed an extraordinary mental if not moral caste. Her skin was a warm brown, something of the color of a Samoan, though more reddish than mulatto in tinge. This, I found afterward, was the

result of a remote crossing with American Indian blood; it was just enough to enrich the color, and to keep down some of the negroid fullness of the lips and modify the crispness of her curling hair. Leah might, indeed, be considered beautiful; what could not, at least, be denied, was the impression of character which was stamped upon her. It was patent in her face, her carriage and her voice. I watched her in admiration. There was a neatness and an immaculate cleanness about her, and I could easily understand how my hostess might regard her as a friend.

Leah's affection for her mistress was evident by the sympathetic manner in which she listened, and by the softness of her look when her eyes fell on my hostess. There was in that look more than the traditional fondness of a negro "mammy" for her charge. I felt immediately one of those quick reactions one sometimes has with servants, or with other persons whom social customs have relegated to a conventionally

inferior position. It was a case of spiritual *noblesse oblige.* Seeing her so fine, so sensitive, so tactful, I was myself put unconsciously upon my best behavior. I could not forget this in any look or any word I gave her. I was constantly watching myself lest I, a guest, a man of a dominant race, should, in consideration and in delicacy, fall behind this servant, this negress. It was a curious delicacy she seemed to enforce.

I can give this effect of Leah upon me, but it is not so easy to describe the cause. She effaced herself, she kept her place rarely. But with all this, she radiated—she had a potent personality. She put down the lamp, she straightened the covers of my bed, answered a few questions, speaking in a rich contralto voice, and went out. That was all. But in those few moments she had impressed me.

It was, no doubt, because of my enjoyment in watching, silently, what went on, that gave my companion the idea that I was exhausted. She apparently inferred that I wished to be left alone, and, rising, she took the tray from

my lap and set it down while she readjusted my pillows. Then, removing a little silver Nuremberg bell, she took up the tray again, and rose to leave me.

"I'll leave the bell here at the head of your bed, Mr. Castle," she said (she had learned my name, of course, when she took my message), "and Leah will be glad to do anything for you that you wish."

As she turned, she looked back, smiling.

"Oh, I haven't told you my own name, yet, have I? I'm Miss Fielding—Joy Fielding. There's nobody here but Leah and me, except Uncle Jerdon, our man-of-all-work, and King, the Chinaman. Midmeadows is a lonely place, though it's lovely in the summer. Well, I hope you'll be able to sleep well, and be much better in the morning. I'll hope to see you then. Good night." She left me after placing the lamp just out of sight.

Later, Leah entered, bringing me some books to read, in case I should be wakeful. I dipped into them all immediately, seeking for further evidence of Miss Fielding's taste.

One was of poems, one of essays, one of short stories, and one a novel.

The house was silent. I heard nothing until quite late, when the two women came up-stairs to retire. By their voices and footsteps, I made out that Leah slept in the room next to mine, and Miss Fielding across the hall, farther off. There was some soft conversation, Leah's voice deep and rich, Miss Fielding's rising several notes above, always with that fluttering, delicate quality which I had noticed. Then the doors closed, and I heard nothing more except, somewhere below, a heavy rhythmic snoring which I assumed came from Uncle Jerdon's room.

There came to me now one of those weary, irksome vigils of the sick, when the darkness and the pain seem to coöperate to stretch out the hours to infinite lengths. I tried one position and another, I lighted the candle and put it out again, but my discomfort and my sleeplessness persisted. I could think of nothing else but Joy Fielding, Joy Fielding, Joy Fielding! I think that a little of my de-

lirium returned, also; but all through my torment I kept repeating to myself that I did not want to know who she was. I refused to speculate upon that, except in ways that were romantic and fantastic. What matter-of-fact, commonplace explanation of her life there might be, I wanted to hold off as long as possible.

II

I was awakened early by the sunshine which came pouring across my bed from the window opposite, lighting up the white wainscoting and showing the room now, clean and brightly distinct to the least detail of the crisp Japanese prints upon the wall.

One sash and the window-shade had been left up, and I could see the slope of a hill which rose behind the house, seeming to shut the place in. The other window was filled with the waving boughs of an apple-tree. The day was fine and balmy; the fresh air of the morning swept deliciously over my bed. It was maddening to have to lie there helpless.

Before long I heard doors opening and closing below, and the sounds of preparations for breakfast—the rattling of a stove, a pump that squeaked whimsically like a bray-

ing donkey, the clatter of pots and pans, and a Chinaman's voice singing in a queer falsetto. With the odors of flowers and damp earth the smell of coffee came up to me, mingled, too, with a whiff from the stable. Then the clock, whose hourly chimes had measured for me the slow march of the night, struck seven with a peal of golden notes.

I heard footsteps come up-stairs to the hall outside my half opened door. There was a soft tapping across the way, and Leah's voice asked quietly:

"What would you like for breakfast, Miss Joy?"

I could just make out the reply in Miss Fielding's blithe tones:

"Oh, just a couple of butterflies' wings, Leah, and a drop of rose-dew, please."

How prettily it sounded! From another it might have seemed silly to me, but not from her. I was amused at her fancy. Miss Fielding, then, was a poet. It was all so in key with the freshness of the morning and the gay sweet sunshine!

I was more comfortable now, and more sane. So, as I lay awaiting her, I wondered how such a woman, so instinct with refinement and with the air of having had considerable social experience, was to be found in so far-away a place. I knew of no residences in this vicinity except an occasional farmhouse; it was remote even from any village. The sight of her as she appeared last night in her elegant negligée came back to me, like the scene of a play. I longed to see her again, to discover if, perhaps, I had not exaggerated it all, or even, perhaps, had dreamed of one so exquisitely gracious.

Leah, also, was a part of the strangeness. She had none of the disturbing beauty of the quadroon—her beauty was without *diablerie,* it was far from showing any sensuality. It was even spiritual in type. Her face, as I brought it up, was more than intelligent, it was lighted by an inward vision. The more I thought of her, the more I wondered if I had not been tricked by my impressionability, by the strangeness of my adventure, by the gla-

mour of the night awakening. To put it to the test, I took advantage of Miss Fielding's suggestion and rang the bell.

Leah appeared in a few moments, and came a little shyly into the room. She wore a clean, fresh, crisp gown of blue, like a hospital nurse's uniform, and was as trim and dignified. No, I had not been mistaken. The light of day showed her still more remarkable than I had remembered. Her regular features, her smooth, coffee-colored skin, her well-kept shapely hands, all testified to an extraordinary breeding.

"Are you ready for your breakfast, sir?" she asked. Her voice was like honey as she inquired how I had passed the night, and apologized for Uncle Jerdon's snoring.

"I'll bring your water first," she suggested, and retired noiselessly, to return in a moment with a bowl, some towels and toilet articles.

She seemed a little embarrassed by the situation, but assisted me in sitting up. Then, finding that I could do for myself well

enough, she went down-stairs, and by the time I had finished my washing, she was back with the tray.

"Miss Joy will be in to see you in a little while, sir," she said as she made me comfortable with dexterous adjustments of my pillows.

But for her "sir," she had in no way acted as a servant, though, on the other hand, she had assumed no attitude of equality. I could not help admiring the fine neutrality she maintained without committing herself to either rôle. All my first impressions of her were intensified by this demeanor, and I awaited the opportunity of assuring her by my own manner of my lack of prejudice on account of her color. Indeed, it was not long before I was almost as unconscious of it, so far as any social distinction was concerned, as a child might have been.

Miss Fielding came in a little later, dewy and shining, dressed all in white—an embroidered linen blouse and a short skirt of serge, which made her seem even younger

than I had remembered. The sight of her expressive, thoughtful, eager face, and the music in her sympathetic voice gave my room quite another aspect. It became a stage again where last night's drama would go on. How long I had waited for her, and now she was come! Only an invalid, perhaps, can understand the difference in atmosphere in that first quick sight of an expected delightful presence to one who has waited for the weary hours to go by and bring the wished-for vision.

She made a few kind inquiries as to my condition, moving meanwhile about the room, disposing of the fresh roses she had brought, lowering the window-sashes and raising the shades, rapid and graceful as a bird on the wing. She was all modern, now; the medieval princess had given place to something more complex, and as much more interesting. Every word, every inflection of her voice, every gesture of her hand, every expression of her mobile face showed subtlety of thought and sentiment; she was obviously a creature

of fine distinctions, of nuances of feeling, though at present her talk was as simple and joyous as a child's. That simplicity of hers, however, was the simplicity of a Greek temple, made up of subtle ratios and proportions, of imperceptible curves and esoteric laws.

She drew up a chair, at last, and sat down beside me. We looked at each other frankly, and smiled, aware of a common thought, the desire to prolong the situation as far as we might. This quickness of her imagination was a delight. But the game was becoming too humorous, now, in broad daylight, for us to keep it up. Our romance was in danger.

"I'm bursting with the obvious," I remarked.

She shook her finger at me with spirit. "If you dare!"

"Oh, I'll not be the first. Man though I am, I can restrain my curiosity."

How quickly her face changed! An almost infantile look came into it, as she said:

"There are so many more curious things than curiosity, if you know what I mean.

Curiosity is such a destructive process, don't you think?"

"And this is creative? The not satisfying it, I mean."

"Yes, wonder is—and mystery. It ramifies so. It splits the ray." She made a queer, mystical gesture, all her own.

"Oh, it quite blossoms!" I said. "I breathe all sorts of perfumes never smelt."

Her eager look came back, and she smiled joyously. "How quick you are! I wish we could keep it up a while! I should have liked to marry Bluebeard! What a splendid dowry he gave! Oh, I would never have opened the door! There was so much more outside than in, wasn't there? But now the rôle is yours; you must be Bluebeard's wife—or Robinson Crusoe. Oh, you must stay on the island—this island with me, and not try to get off. There are a few little places we can explore without danger—will you be satisfied with them?"

Somehow I got the spirit of it, as at hearing some words of a strange language elo-

quently spoken. She was warning me off—but from what? I would find out soon enough, should the meaning need to be made more definite. It was like a game of jackstraws; if I did not play gingerly I should bring down the commonplace upon us. My situation was delicate—it almost seemed that I had arrived, in some way, inopportunely.

But she had gone on. "Did you read my books?" she asked, taking up one of them.

"I read that one—the poems. I got quite lost in them."

"Which ones?" She looked up from the book eagerly.

"*The Journey,* and,—" I hesitated, "—*The Riders.*" I was watching her face earnestly.

"Oh, how right you are!" She was perfectly simple about it. There was no conceit in her. "It means, doesn't it, that we already have a language? But you must read the essays, too. Then maybe we'll have a philosophy."

"I'll explore them with pleasure." I tried

to keep the appeal out of my voice. "I have such a lot of things to do before I go."

She got this quite as I intended. "Well, we'll be perfectly natural and let come what may, as it seems to be all decided for us. We won't force the game. But I'm afraid you'll never be contented. You'll leave the island first, I'm quite sure."

I protested; she shook her head slowly. I knew she was thinking very hard of something. Her smile was wistful, her eyes, always fixed on mine, were almost somber in their expression.

"Would you dare promise?"

I knew now there was something behind all this; some fear of my presence.

"Shall I?" I fenced, more to draw her on than from any doubt of her meaning or reluctance to agree with her wish.

"It's base of me—it's foolish, too, for it can really do no good. But, you see, I don't quite know you, do I?"

"And don't quite want to?" I was unkind enough to say, but only with the same

motive as before. I wanted to get at the bottom of it—find out what it was she dreaded, and dared not acknowledge that she did.

She was a little hurt and said that it wasn't fair to say so, that I wasn't playing the game. I was properly contrite, and, for the moment, gave up the duel.

"Let it be a promise, then," I said.

At this, I thought she looked relieved; and that she should be so at my bare word touched me. It did cross my mind that, perceiving my adaptability to this sort of affair, she might perhaps have taken an adventitious means of heightening the romance of the situation with such innuendo; but she seemed to me to be altogether too direct for that, and too sapient, as well.

"Thank you. I may hold you to that promise. Does that seem ungracious?"

There it was. There was most definitely something which she didn't wish me to know, and which my advent jeoparded. I was truly sorry for her now, and a little embarrassed at my position. Meanwhile her eyes were

steadily questioning mine, as if to make sure that I was to be trusted. I took up her last remark to relieve the tensity of her mood.

"You couldn't be ungracious, I'm sure. I should as soon suspect Leah!"

She laughed more freely. "Oh, I'm so glad you appreciate her! That says more for you than all the rest."

"The rest?" I insisted, quite ready for a compliment.

She gave it to me with her head a little on one side, and her right eyebrow, the irregular one, whimsically upraised.

"Yes. Your keeping it up so well, you know."

"Oh, I'll keep it up! It's the chief charm of being here, flat on my back, in a strange place. I'm sure it will be most amusing."

"I'm not so sure. I'm full of moods and whims—you're going to be terribly disappointed in me sometimes—though that sounds like vanity—and I may take advantage of your complaisance, of your promise, that is. I hope you won't regret it."

So it rested, my promise not to be too inquisitive (for I took its meaning to be that), given and accepted. It quite whetted my appetite, you may be sure. If all this talk seems fine-spun, it is my fault in the telling of it, for in the give-and-take we perfectly understood each other. I can not, of course, give her delicate inflections, but these, with her looks and gestures, said as much as her words.

But if this equivocal conversation was vague and shadowy, she could pass into the sunshine as deftly. She seemed to do so now, as she rose and went to the open window and whistled. A chorus of barks answered her. She turned to me.

"I must go down to my dogs," she said. "I wish you could see them—that is, if you like collies. I have five, all thoroughbreds—they're beauties! You'll have to get acquainted with them as soon as you're able to go down-stairs."

She leaned a little out of the window and

called, "Hi! Nokomis!" drawing out the vowels. A deep bark responded.

"Hiawatha!" she called next, and she was answered by a sharp, frenzied yelping. "Minnehaha!" followed—she almost sang the name, which was replied to like the others. Then Chevalier and John O'Groat greeted her in turn.

"I'm going to take them for their morning run," she said, as she left me. "I'll examine you on the essays when I come back."

She went down, and soon after I heard her talking, evidently to Uncle Jerdon and to King. Then the barking rose ecstatically, receded in the distance, and finally was lost. I took up the essays and read for a while. My head was much better, and my soreness was slowly disappearing, but the constrained positions I had to hold to keep my rib from paining me made me too weary and impatient to put my mind on my book. I could hardly wait for Miss Fielding to return, and lay inert, watching the flies drift lazily through

the sunshine that filled the room, hoping that Leah, at least, might come in to break my ennui. I welcomed even the hoarse, squeaky cry of King's pump, the occasional crowing of a rooster, the twittering of birds in the apple-tree, and the many little homely sounds of country life. The fragrant perfume of the roses in the room was a blessed reminder of Miss Fielding's kindness.

In a half-hour, I heard the dogs approaching, and she came into the room again, hatless, bringing a new breath of June with her. Her hair was blown to a silky veil through which her eyes shone and her rosy cheeks glowed as she smiled at me over the footboard of my bed. Throwing off her little white bolero, a saucy thing with black velvet collar and cuffs, she went to the mirror and gathered up the loose strands of hair, tucking them in, here and there, with deft touches of her fingers, and adjusting them with dark tortoise-shell pins, until her little head, coiffed high, was as smooth as a cat's.

She came up to the bedside and was quick

to notice by my nervous movements that I was suffering. Sitting down she began to tell gaily of her walk over the hill, and, as she spoke, my aching was calmed as if she had laid a finger on the electric switch that controlled it. Then she suggested reading to me, and took up the volume of poems we had discussed.

Her voice was not quite intense enough for strong emotion; it had not the momentum, so to speak, to carry the lines along with the swing and rhythm necessary. It was too light for that, but it more than made up for it by its sympathetic tenderness and the delicacy of its inflection. Her tones lulled me, and I fell asleep.

In the afternoon she brought her mending, and we talked for a couple of hours or so, always keeping, as she expressed it, "on the island." What personalities we discussed, that is, had no reference to her history or her plans. She warned me off very cleverly several times when the talk approached her circumstances or even her moods and tastes.

When she confessed that she played a little on the piano and violin, I positively insisted upon my rights as an invalid to be amused. She rolled up her work and went to get her violin without excuses or apologies.

I waited with considerable anxiety to hear what and how she would play, not committing myself as to my own choice of composers. She began in her own room, and through the opened doors I heard the strains of the *Prize Song* played with great verve and sentiment. I was delighted. She came, still playing, into my chamber, her sleeves rolled up (she said she could not play else), and accepted my compliments graciously and simply. Then, walking up and down, absorbed, she gave me fragments of César Franck's sonata for the violin and piano. To watch her, supple, virile, rapt, to note her clever, accomplished technique, her passionate, free-armed command of the bow—I have seldom seen such a splendid attack or so sure and true a vibrato—was a joy beautifully associated with the clarity and subtle craftsmanship of the master.

So she ran on, alternating her renditions with scraps of talk that showed a keen musical sense and an appreciation of the radical, ultra-modern movement of the time. Next she burst into a vibrant, dramatic Polish folk-song that excited me like a fire. And finally, as a *tour de force,* her eyes dancing as she watched me over her shoulder with some new audacious devil in her smile, she enchanted me with a vivid piece most astonishingly enlivened with flights of technique—trills, brilliant chord passages, and runs with the upward and downward "staccato bow." Then she threw down her fiddle and came up to me, laughing.

That evening she had another delight for me, coming to my bedside and reading Villon and Verlaine in the original, translating the old French for me when I was perplexed by the *argot.* And for the picture, I need only add that Leah was of the circle, and made her own comments!

III

There was, next morning, a little dialogue much like that which I had overheard the day before, except that this time it was "stewed rose-leaves with a small pot of sunshine," which Miss Fielding was fanciful enough to demand. I wondered what, after such a pleasantry, she did have; for I took it to be some joke between her and Leah, who, no doubt, translated the metaphor into something more substantial.

As I ate breakfast, I could hear Miss Fielding singing in her room. She came in before I had finished my egg and coffee, bringing an armful of new magazines. This time she was dressed in pongee and wore a short string of graduated white coral beads which was mimicked, when she smiled, by her little teeth.

"I've found out about you—quite by accident, though, Mr. Castle, really," she said gaily; and, opening one of the magazines, she tapped with her hand the picture of a country house my firm had just rather successfully completed. "So you're an architect! And I'm the first to get off the island, after all!"

"It doesn't matter, I suppose, so long as I stay on?" I asked.

"Oh, this doesn't by any means absolve you of your promise," she answered, examining the illustration carefully, still standing at the foot of the bed.

"You aren't really very much wiser, are you? There are architects *and* architects, you know."

"Yes," she said, apparently thinking of something else. "Quite as there are women and women," she added, turning over the pages idly.

"There's only one of *your* sort!" I exclaimed.

A queer smile passed and was repressed

upon her lips, molding them into new curves. "Yes, only one of *me*."

"I don't exactly mean that, either," I went on. "The fact is, rather, that there *is* more than one of me. There's the architect and the man in me—and how many more! One is always astonishing the others. Aren't there, after all, several of you, Miss Fielding?"

She gave me a frightened glance, then tossed the magazine on the bed. It wasn't petulance; she seemed to be disturbed at the subject.

"Oh, I'm only a White Cat!" she said cryptically.

She seemed anything but that, to me.

"I'll tell you about it sometime—perhaps," she added. "But not now."

She stood with her hands behind her back, raising herself on her toes, and changed the subject. "I'm awfully anxious to show you this house, now that I know you're an architect. It's one of the oldest hereabout, and it was a wreck when I bought it. I've had it all

done over inside, and I shall expect you to compliment me on my taste, for it's mainly my own ideas."

"What I've seen of it is charming—but a bit impersonal, perhaps."

"Oh, this is only the guest-chamber. One doesn't inflict one's ideas on the transient visitor. Of course this is a bloodless, sexless place. You'll find personality enough in my room, I fancy. I hope you'll be able to get down-stairs by day after to-morrow, and have a chance to look about at the place. I'm sure you'll love Midmeadows. I'm expecting the doctor down here this afternoon, and he'll probably be able to tell you how long you'll have to stay. I do hope you won't get well too fast, Mr. Castle."

"Trust me for that," I said. "I give you fair notice, I shall probably do some malingering. But I shall be glad to see the doctor, if only to make sure that I can impose on him."

My heart sank, nevertheless, at the thought of his interruption of our idyl. I felt an

illogical right to her by discovery, a certain franchise in her good graces that Fate herself had given me. The possible weakening of our alliance, however, was only the negative side of my annoyance. The positive aspect was that Doctor Copin seemed to be an old acquaintance, even a friend; for Miss Fielding had mentioned that she was going to walk over to the Harbor to meet him. It was possible, even—and the idea was poison—that she was in love with him. Well, I must needs wait and see him before I decided as to that chance.

I asked her to call her dogs again, and, seeing that it might amuse me, she offered to bring Nokomis, the best-behaved, and matron of the kennel, up to see me. I accepted eagerly, and, from the window, she called her favorite.

Nokomis was one of the most beautiful collies I have ever seen, a tawny red, or sable, with white ruff, feet, and tail-point. Her head was very finely shaped—not too dull for keenness, nor with too much of the silly grey-

hound's tapering muzzle, as not a few flat-headed prize-winners, bred chiefly for color and coat, have. She had dark brown eyes set with that obliqueness that gives the breed its characteristic look of brightness, kindness and craft. Her small ears, as she entered, were semi-erect, giving her, as she stopped with her head slightly on one side, the sharp, doubtful expression of the fox. She came with her flag up, as if she were on exhibition before judges, marched to Miss Fielding and waited for orders.

"Isn't she a darling?" Miss Fielding said affectionately, rubbing her pet's neck. "*You* hasn't got flappy, saddle-bag ears and a high forehead and a velvet jacket, *has* you! I don't see no snipey nose! Hasn't she got an 'honest, sonsie, bawsint face,' Mr. Castle? Only it isn't 'bawsint.' And look at her gawcie tail, wi' upward curl!' She has old Cockie herself for an ancestor, *she* has!"

Nokomis gravely stood on her hind legs with her forepaws on her mistress' skirt, panting—smiling, I might well say. Then,

in obedience to a word and a gesture, she dropped and came over to me in so dignified and friendly a way that I fell promptly in love with her. Her outer coat was abundant, straight and stiff, the under one so thick and soft and furry that I could not find the skin. Her ruff was magnificent, her chest deep and strong. I was sure she would be a good worker; her wit had already been proved.

Miss Fielding was pleased with my appreciation, and consented to having Nokomis remain, and so, for the rest of the day, except for occasional inquisitive excursions, she lay on the floor beside my bed, thumping her tail and listening attentively whenever I looked down to speak to her.

Early in the afternoon Miss Fielding put on a fresh linen waist and corduroy skirt to set out for the station. Before she went she moved about the room, readjusting the flowers, drawing a shade or two which threatened to let the sun into my eyes, renewing my pitcher of water and so on, giving me in five minutes a dozen evidences of her tact,

thoughtfulness and consideration. Then, with a last warning to Nokomis to take good care of me, she went away, leaving the apartment depressingly empty.

Leah came in occasionally, however, to see if I was comfortable, but I could get little talk from her. She answered all my questions, looking at me with her melting, deep brown eyes, which were really not a little like those of old Nokomis, but volunteering no remark of her own. Between the two I managed to be fairly patient till, at about three o'clock, Miss Fielding returned with the doctor. I was aware of their approach for some time before they arrived by the joyous barking of the collies in front of the stable. At this Nokomis pricked up her ears, but was too well-bred to pay more attention. I had laughed at her for yawning wide with her wolf-like jaws, and she was sensitively on her dignity.

Doctor Copin was tall and thin and younger than I had expected; and like most young doctors he attempted to make much of his years

by a pointed, reddish beard. Nature had assisted him in this attempt, also, by removing enough of his hair to give him a shiny bald forehead almost to the crown of his head, and making him near-sighted enough to require strong eye-glasses. But all this could not induce me to think him more than twenty-seven or eight years of age. His eyes were of that china blue which, with red hair, is so apt to give a selfish, heartless expression, which went very well with his general bloodlessness. Except for those protruding blue eyes he might, with his yellowy-brown suit and his slender, long hands, have been an animated caricature, done in red chalk. Worst of all, to my mind, he made puns.

He approached me with the jocose air affected by physicians, and looked me over with a grin. I could see, under his sparse beard, that he had a lizard chin receding comically.

"Well, Mr. Castle," he said, "I expect you haven't been climbing any more trees with your machine lately, have you? Feeling like Adam, after the creation of Eve, with that

fourth rib of yours? Let me have a feel of it. Ah!"

He prodded me a little. "Well, we're doing so-so," he went on. "If you were a football player you'd be up in five minutes. How's the head? I suppose you haven't had quite such a big one since you put on long pants. You're not having many long pants these days, I fancy, with that cracked bone in your chest, are you?" And so on. I tried to smile, and did not succeed till I had caught sight of Miss Fielding's face frowning over his shoulder.

I was doing well, it seemed. It was nothing but a matter of time and patience. The worst of it was the shaking up, and for that, rest was all that was necessary.

I answered his pleasantries, asked him the news in town, and thanked him for what he had done, which, indeed, was not much. If I have given the impression that he was an ass, that was not at all how he impressed me. Though he persistently refused to talk sense, and turned everything I said into jest, I was

ready enough to believe that he knew his business and stood well in the profession. I got little more than this however, for he soon left for a talk—likely a professional one, I imagined—with my hostess. This lasted till, after an early dinner, he left the house to be driven back to the station by Uncle Jerdon. Idle and bored as I was, while alone, I speculated upon his relations with Miss Fielding; but from what I had seen I could hardly regard him as a rival. Still, I knew well enough that one could not predicate from a man's appearance how women might like him. Doctor Copin would not be here in attendance, much less as a visitor, unless there was some value in him. He evidently knew the place well enough to have been at Midmeadows often. It made me, for no particular reason that I could name, uncomfortable.

It was still and warm, the beginning of the hush of twilight, the birds' chattering quieted, when voices came plainly up to me through the open window beside my bed. Miss Fielding and the doctor were coming

round a corner of the house on their way to the stable.

"I wish when she comes, next time, you'd have Leah let me know," I heard Doctor Copin say earnestly.

"I won't promise to do that," was her reply.

"Why not?" he asked sharply.

"Why do you want to know?" she asked.

"You know well enough. You know how interested I am in her."

"I wish I *did!*"

This was the last I could make out, for they passed into the yard behind the house. I heard the carriage drive off, and soon after Miss Fielding's voice inside the house, calling for Leah to come down. I thought that I detected a strain of excitement, even of alarm in her tones.

A half-hour afterward, she came into my room with a chess-board, and asked me if I played the game. I was delighted to try it with her, though I was poor enough at it, and she beat me easily.

She was quite as charming as ever, but, as I studied my strategy, she had time in the silent pauses to fall into little moods of reverie, letting the talk drop naturally. I was not too absorbed in my play to notice it, and once or twice I looked up from the board to see her face show a tragic expression, clearing, under my surveillance, with what seemed to be a forced smile. The little lines near her eyes seemed to have deepened since morning, and two vertical ones came, at times, cutting upright clefts between her brows. Once or twice she put her hand to her head suddenly. Her listlessness accented her grace, but she seemed distinctly older.

After she had announced mate in three moves she awaited my capitulation. Then she put the board and men aside wearily.

"You'll find it desperately stupid here, I know, Mr. Castle," she began. "I wish we could be more amusing, but I'm a bit blue tonight."

"I only reproach myself for not being able to make you forget it," I said. "As for my-

self, I always feel like the hero of a fairy tale when you're about."

She gave her head a quick, backward shake, as if to free her mind of some disturbing thought. "Oh, I told you I was the White Cat, you know!" she replied. "Can't you imagine how interesting it must be for us to have any one here at all, and you most especially? Why, I feel that you are a friend, already. If it hadn't been so, I shouldn't have dared to confess so frankly that I'm depressed."

"What can I possibly say of you, then, who have proved yourself so friendly? I shall be glad when it comes my turn to give, and yours to receive."

"Oh, that time will come soon enough, I'm afraid," she said, folding her hands in her lap, and looking down at them.

"You make me quite long for it!"

"Oh, don't long for it!" she exclaimed, and then rose nervously to stand facing the lamp with a fixed, entranced gaze. "It will mean, perhaps, that I shall need all your sympathy,

all your charity," she added, turning, ever so slowly, to look down at me.

"I will give anything you ask——"

"And I shall ask nothing," she put in quickly. Again she threw her head back with that quick, freeing gesture. I saw what she meant. It would be put to my tact and intuition.

She held out her hand impulsively and put it into mine. It seemed very small and slight, and it was cold. Then, summoning a smile so rapid that it came and went in a flash, she bade me good night and left the room.

For fully an hour after that, I heard her voice and Leah's in a steady, low conversation in the room across the hall. At nine, Leah came in to adjust the light and see that I wanted nothing. I fell into an uneasy sleep, waking at every cock-crow.

IV

The next day was harsh and cloudy. There was a light fog in from the sea, enough to make it a little cold, and to depress my spirits. It was, therefore, with great impatience that I awaited the matutinal visit from my hostess. She was usually up betimes; to-day she slept late.

It had already become one of my chief diversions to listen for the little morning colloquy in the hall, but to-day I heard nothing till after eight o'clock, when Leah came upstairs, knocked on the opposite door, which was always half-open at night, and put her usual question.

Miss Fielding's voice came sharp and clear, a little querulous.

"Oh, I'll have bacon and eggs, I think; but wait a while, Leah; I'm sleepy and I don't want to get up yet."

Leah closed my own door softly and went down-stairs. I was disappointed. I hoped Miss Fielding was not in a bad humor, though that seemed impossible. When Leah came up with the tray and gave me a "good morning," I said:

"Leah, I wish you'd ask Miss Fielding if Nokomis can't come up into my room this morning, will you?"

She hesitated just long enough for me to notice that she was troubled; then she put down the tray, saying:

"Nokomis is a queer old dog, Mr. Castle, and I don't know that she'll come."

"Why, she was here all day yesterday and we had a beautiful time together!"

"I know." Leah turned to leave. "I'll speak about it, of course, but—well, these dogs have all sorts of fancies, and you can't always depend upon them. They will and they won't." She did not look at me as she answered, and went out immediately.

I felt that I had somehow blundered into an indiscretion, though what it was I couldn't

possibly see. It made me exceedingly uncomfortable, for I would have done anything rather than take advantage of the kindness and hospitality with which I had been treated. I remembered that I had not yet heard the dogs barking; that might possibly mean something, but it gave me no clue. I had to give it up and try to make amends as well as I might.

A little later I heard Miss Fielding's door slam, and her footsteps running down the stairs. That she had not come in to see me, even if for only a few words, did not decrease my annoyance. Shortly after came a chorus of barks, but I fancied that they were not of the same mood that I had noted before; there seemed to be something antagonistic in their protesting notes, as if some stranger had perhaps passed the house. I had got the idea that Midmeadows was a lonely place, though I had not yet seen the outside of the building, and no doubt the collies were distrustful of visitors. I waited expectantly to hear Miss Fielding call them, one by one, as

she had before; but, if she did so, I missed it.

For half an hour or more there was a steady pounding down-stairs, and, when Leah came for my tray, I heard some one whistling, the least bit out of tune. Leah was silent and reserved. She asked how I had slept, and if I were better, and there the conversation ended.

Finally, at about eleven o'clock, Miss Fielding came in. I looked up eagerly.

She wore a stiffly laundered shirt-waist, noticeably stained and soiled, though it had evidently been put on clean that morning. She wore no stock, and the neck was turned away in a V, carelessly, showing a little gold chain with a sapphire pendant, and the sleeves were rolled up above her dimpled elbows. She had a heavy walking-skirt and heavy mannish shoes whose soles projected a full half-inch beyond the uppers. Her hair, which, before, I had always seen exquisitely coiled high on her head, was done in a full pompadour, though now it fell in flat folds

over her forehead and wisped out in the back of her neck.

She came up to my bedside and smiled frankly at me. I got a pronounced odor of Santal.

"Well, how are you to-day?" she said jovially. "Do you feel better?"

I said that I did, noticing that she wore three rings on her left hand. It was good to see her so full of life and energy.

"You certainly were a sight when you were brought in," she went on; "I was frightened to death. I never saw any one unconscious before, and I thought you were dead, for sure. Isn't it lucky the doctor was here? I'm awfully sorry your auto was smashed up so, for I'd like to try it myself. I've been wanting one. Yours is a foreign make, isn't it? I've been looking it over. It's a water-cooled engine, I see. But I want a six-cylinder. I'm going to see if Uncle Jerdon and I can't patch it up so that it'll go."

"Fancy a girl's caring about machinery!" I said, smiling at her enthusiasm. "You're

the last person in the world I'd ever think would have any interest in it."

"Why?" she said, sitting on the edge of the bed, and, turning down her sleeves, covered her round, strong arms.

"I thought that you were more of the artistic temperament."

"Oh, I like to use my hands," she said. She held one out, its fingers stiffly opened, then clenched her fist firmly. "They're stronger than they look. Try it!"

She took my hand in hers and gave me a grip as strong as any ordinary man's.

"That comes from your violin practice, I suppose," I remarked.

Her eyes were on mine, and I saw that the pupils were dilated, and the irises so dark as almost to appear black. She did not answer me for a moment, and then simply nodded vaguely and changed the subject.

"I've taken the clock apart more than once. The dining-room one, I mean. When the hands point to eight, it strikes four and it's half-past two, really. I have to tell time by

an algebraic formula. I'm going to dissect it again and see if I can't get it right." She laughed merrily, swinging her foot back and forth.

At that moment the collies began to bark again. She sprang up impatiently, and went to the window.

"Darn those dogs!" she complained, "don't they make a horrid racket, though! I can't keep them quiet." Then she raised the sash abruptly, leaned out and cried, "Hush up, there!"

Their answer was a chorus of indignation. She let down the window with a clatter, and walked to the mirror to rearrange her hair, using silver pins that shone conspicuously in her dark locks. Her skirt had sagged away from her belt, at the back, from the violence of her work, no doubt, and she reached to fix it, turning to smile at me coquettishly after she did so.

"Do you like my hair done high or low?" she asked.

"I like it best the way I first saw it, that

night," I said. "It was done in a fillet, or a bandeau, wasn't it?"

"Why, no! It was pompadoured, wasn't it? Oh, yes—perhaps it was—I forget—but it's so fine that I can't do anything with it."

Except for these little lapses of abstraction when she stared so puzzlingly at me, she was in high spirits. Her presence filled the room with electricity; she surcharged its atmosphere. She seemed more virile than ever, more full of life, so full that it actually seemed to splash over in all sorts of energetic gestures of her head and hands. As she stood, now, in the center of the room, she made a quick dash at a fly that drifted past, caught it in her hand, smiled at her dexterity, and tossed it aside. She made passes and rapid motions with her arms, as if she were swinging a tennis racket, and tapped her toes and heels in a little clog-dance as she walked. I saw that she was getting bored.

"Well," she said at last, "I must go to work. If there's anything you want Leah will do it for you. You can call her. There's

the bell. Don't hesitate to ring it. I'll be so glad when you can come down-stairs and see the place. It's a jolly old shack—you'll like it!"

She waved her hand jauntily and swung out of the room. I heard her run down-stairs, and a little later the pounding and the whistling recommenced.

She semed different to-day, but I imagined that perhaps it was only that she was feeling better in health and mind, though she had not appeared really ill before. She seemed younger than ever, too, the little lines in her face seemed to be mostly ironed out. No doubt it was, as women say, "her day." Her beauty was more obvious; it was undeniable.

Yet something about her manner troubled me. I was distinctly disappointed; she seemed less subtle, less imaginative. She was no longer the princess of my fairy tale; the spell had waned. But if her familiarity and naturalness upon further acquaintance were less romantic, they were more real, and had some of the actuality of prose. We could

still be good friends, for I liked her immensely. Perhaps she had thought we had gone too far sentimentally, and was trying to put our relations upon a firmer and more matter-of-fact basis. Perhaps, even, Doctor Copin's visit had, in some way, affected her, and she had considered that her *entente* with me was becoming dangerous. Well, it was certainly my place, as a stranger thrust upon her hospitality, to take whatever cue she gave me, disappointing as that line of conduct should prove. For I had been stirred and awakened by her. I could not deny that to myself. And no doubt I had taken her altogether too seriously.

I saw no more of her till late in the afternoon, but, meanwhile, Leah made me a welcome visit. After luncheon she asked me, quite modestly, if I would like her to read to me or would rather play chess. I chose the reading, wanting very much the opportunity of studying her. Her attention seemed, however, to be distracted; I was sure of it when, a little later, she excused herself to go down-

stairs. Then I noticed the barking of the dogs, high-pitched and excited.

She came back soon to finish her reading, and, that done, we fell to talking. As she sat, her dark face was outlined against the white woodwork of the alcove like a silhouette. Her white teeth shone.

I asked her about her education.

"I went to a school for colored women," she said, "fitting myself to be a teacher. But of course it's hard for a colored girl to get a chance, except with her own race, and I didn't want to go South. Then I got this place with Miss Fielding."

"I can't imagine any situation more delightful," I said, watching her.

Her eyes burned, smothered in quickening tears, but her voice was calm enough. "It's lovely here. I don't mind the loneliness a bit. It's nothing to what I have endured in big cities."

She gave it to me simply, with no apparent bid for sympathy, but I knew enough of the pathetic isolation of the educated negro, cut

off from any real mental communion with the blacks as well as with the whites, to interpret the repression of her manner. There was a tragedy in her words.

"Well," I said, "it strikes me that you're in luck to be here with such a companion as Miss Fielding. And she's as fortunate, too. I'm sure you get on beautifully. Still, how *she* can stand it, away off from every one, I don't see quite so well."

"Do you think she's—unhappy?" Leah asked after a pause.

"Certainly not to-day, at least. Yesterday I shouldn't have been quite so sure that she wasn't."

"Oh, she has her moods," Leah admitted. "I do my best to indulge them." She looked up at me. "So must you, too, Mr. Castle!" She held my eyes deliberately, as if expecting my promise.

"How could I be so ungrateful as not to, in the circumstances?"

"I mean—you see, she doesn't like to be questioned. I have to be very careful. She

has her fancies, and often seems inconsistent, even a bit eccentric. It may be her life here alone. You know she sees so few people. You won't notice it?" Still her eyes appealed to me.

"I shan't at least show that I do."

She seemed dissatisfied.

"Except, perhaps, to you," I added, trying, as I had tried with Miss Fielding, to get to the bottom of her dread.

"Oh, not to me," she begged. "She's too fine for us to be discussing. I've said too much already, I'm afraid. I don't know why I did. Only——"

I said it for her. "Only, I am quartered on you, here, and you can't get rid of me. You have, in a way, a spy in camp. By an accident, I'm here, and you're at my mercy. Isn't that it? You don't, I mean, quite know what I am, and you'd like to be able to trust me, whatever happens." It was a jump in the dark for me.

I could see her fingers working; she had clasped her hands.

"Oh, I hope I haven't given you the idea that anything is likely to happen," she said anxiously. "If I have, I'm quite sorry I spoke. If you'll only take everything quite as a matter of course—that's all I mean—her moods, you know, and not think things—" She ended without attempting to be more lucid, for there was a sound of some one coming up-stairs.

Miss Fielding came into the room, and her delicate right eyebrow rose at seeing Leah sitting there, doing nothing.

"Leah, go down and tie up the dogs; they're chasing all over the place!" Her voice was crisp and peremptory.

Leah went away quietly; I got a swift glance of mute appeal at me as she left. Miss Fielding came to my side and looked down at me quizzically, her thumbs in her belt.

"Do you mind telling me your name?" she said. "It's rather awkward not to know, you know."

"Oh, Castle's my real name, right enough," I answered.

"Castle?" she repeated, and then, as if recollecting: "Of course, but I meant your first name." Her face cleared.

"Chester Castle," I enlarged. "A good name for an architect, isn't it?"

"An architect, really? Then I'll have to get you to help me on my little house. But you're too good-looking for an architect," she laughed. "I thought they always wore pointed beards, like doctors."

"Oh, I'm not a Beaux-Arts man," I said, keeping up with her mood.

"Are you married?"

"No, I'm happy to say I'm not."

"So am I!" she laughed. "That is to say, I'm glad *I'm* not, and I'm glad you're not. My name is Joy. Isn't it silly? It doesn't fit me at all. I ought to have been called Edna."

"Very well, then, you shall be!" I volunteered.

She took it without surprise or annoyance. "Oh, I don't stand on ceremony. That's silly. If you're going to stay here for a week

I shall have to call you Chester. Do you mind? It's an awful bore to have to say 'Mr. Castle' all the time."

"By all means. My mother and my friends call me 'Chet'—"

"That's better still. Chet." She tried it audibly. "I rather like that."

"You're welcome to it." I laughed at her directness.

"But you haven't asked me any questions! I should think you'd be curious. Really, it isn't at all complimentary to have you so indifferent."

"Oh, I'm only keeping 'on the island'," I returned.

"Keeping—what?"

"Don't you remember—about staying 'on the island'? You know you asked me yourself to."

"Oh, yes—did I? I forget." The puzzled look on her face had appeared again, but was driven away. "Well, there really isn't much to know about me. It's stupid enough here at Midmeadows. It's my own

place, you know. It used to belong to my grandfather. I've had it ever since he died. I suppose it's good for me here, for I'm ill a good part of the time. I'm up and I'm down. But when I'm up, I'm up pretty high, and when I'm down, I'm 'way down in the depths."

She had sat down in a chair and had crossed her legs, one over the other, wagging one foot and clasping her hands across her knees so tightly that the blood was driven from her white knuckles to the ends of her purple fingers. It is always an awkward pose; I have often wondered how a pretty girl could ever take it. Now she drew her chair closer to the bedside and took my hand.

"Let me see your hand," she said suddenly. "I'll read your palm, if you like."

She bent over it, drawing so near that her head was quite close to mine, so close that, had it not been for the perfume she used, I should have got the odor of her hair. When she turned to me, smiling, she seemed very near indeed, though none too near me. She

began her reading of the lines, holding my hand in both hers, pointing to the signs with one finger, trying the resistance of my thumb, squeezing the flesh to determine its firmness, kneading it and handling it in quite the professional manner. It took her some time. The opinions she gave me were not particularly affording, but they were rather cleverly put. She made a good deal of my "magnetism," saying that she could actually feel it. I was properly flattered. I could feel hers, easily enough.

Then she dropped my hand, rose and yawned as freely as had Nokomis herself.

"I'm starving!" she exclaimed. "I must see what's the matter with dinner. I'm sorry you can't come down, Chet. I hate to eat all alone."

"Why, doesn't Leah eat with you?" I asked, surprised.

"No, I can't quite go *that!*" she said emphatically, as she made an irrelevant athletic gesture. "I have to draw the line somewhere, you know. I have Uncle Jerdon

sometimes, though, just for the fun of seeing him eat. He's perfectly lovely! He holds his fork in the Kansas City style, this way—" She illustrated a familiar restaurant attitude, with the thumb and little finger of her left hand braced under a paper-knife, the three middle fingers curled atop. "Then he always loads up his fork with his knife, a little piece of meat, and a little piece of potato, and a little dab of butter and a little swish of gravy and then—" She showed me how, pretending to toss it into her mouth, and wiped her lips with the back of her hand, in a way that made me laugh aloud. "You could hear him eat, 'way up here! Golly! it makes me hungry to talk about it!" she added. "I'll see you later, Chet. Oh—I'll send you up some current jelly. I made it myself; sure cure for the measles! Remember, you have to like it!" And she was off in a two-step.

I smiled to myself at her pantomime, after she was gone. How I had misjudged her at first! She seemed commoner, but our friend-

ship was, perhaps, more natural. She was no longer the wonderful, exotic, medieval princess in the tower, but she was a frank, wholesome creature, full of human charms and faults. I decided, by reason of that sane analysis, that I was improving in health. My bang on the head, no doubt, had made me unduly impressionable.

She did not keep her word in regard to coming in after dinner. Leah brought up my tray, as usual, and took it away, saying that she was unable to stay with me. She seemed abstracted and nervous, and I forbore to question her. I spent a dreary evening alone.

The pounding went on for two hours or more after dinner, and then Miss Fielding came up-stairs to her room. She contented herself with putting her head through the doorway and calling out "Good night, Chet!" and then I heard her door slam. There was no talk between the two women that I could hear.

V

"Sliced kisses, fried in tears," were the words I heard Miss Fielding reply to Leah's morning call, early the next day. I had waited long, for the day was bright and I wakened at sunrise. Her fanciful order put me immediately into a good humor, and I was intensely curious to see what the day would bring forth.

The collies were barking vociferously, joyously. Suddenly they stopped, and then, one by one, I heard them greet their mistress. It was very prettily done. Leah, coming in, found me smiling, and smiled back at me. Seeing me so much better, she offered timidly to help dress me, and I welcomed her proposal to bring me hot water and what was necessary for shaving. My own clothes had been sent down, so I prepared myself for my châtelaine's visit.

Joy came into my room with a sweet, low, "Good morning, Mr. Castle!" which threw me back not a little, after what had taken place on the yesterday. I was about to hazard some good-natured sarcasm, but the sight of her face inhibited it, and something of what Leah had said came back to me. I answered the greeting without comment, therefore, and waited for her to set the pace.

She was in an exquisitely fresh, simple organdy frock, and had on a garden hat and gauntleted garden gloves; her arms were filled with roses. Her brow wrinkled slightly as she noticed the fading blossoms which had been left in the vases.

"I'm afraid I neglected you yesterday," she said, as she set about removing the dejected roses and putting fresh ones in their places. As she came near me, I noticed little dewy drops on her neatly coiled hair, where she had dashed it with violet water. There was no trace of any other scent, save that of the roses. She drew off her gloves and I saw that she wore no rings.

She sat down for a moment. I had observed before that not only could Miss Fielding be remarkably graceful in pose and in action, but that she could be as astonishingly *gauche* as well. Astonishingly, that is, for her—for one who *could* be so graceful. This, however, was decidedly one of her graceful days, or rather, perhaps, as Leah had said, moods. Her lines melted and composed. There was positive elegance in the way she used her hands, gesticulating freely. It enhanced the charm of her voice, so limpid and full of feeling.

"Isn't it a beautiful morning! What a shame it is that you can't get up. You must hurry and convalesce—just enough to be able to see the place, and not so much as to have to go away. Perhaps you can get into a chair by to-morrow. Did you hear my doggies? I can recognize each of them by the voice, and you will be able to, too, if you only stay here long enough. Nokomis is the deepest-toned one. She's the oldest, you know, and the most dignified. Hiawatha is

the little yappy one. He's a very silly little pup!"

"I'm sorry Nokomis didn't want to come up to see me, yesterday," I said. "But I hope you'll pardon my taking the liberty of asking for her. I know you probably don't often allow them in the house."

"Why, of *course* Nokomis can come up; the idea! She'd love it. Would you like to see her now?" Then, with her eyes on mine, and noticing my bewildered look, no doubt, she added, with a queer expression, "Nokomis wasn't quite well yesterday. She is getting old, you know." She rose restlessly. "Will you wait a moment, please? I want to speak to Leah," and she went out.

Something had passed over her spirits, I couldn't tell what. It was like the shadow of a cloud sweeping rapidly across a sunny hillside. Whatever it was, it was gone when she returned.

She went directly to the window, threw up the sash, and called down, "Nokomis! Hi, Nokomis!" A bark responded.

"Come up here, old lady! Yes, come right up. Wipe your feet, please. Wipe your *feet,* Nokomis!"

The next thing there was a pattering of feet upon the stairs, and the bitch bounded into the room, her tail wagging. She ran up to Miss Fielding immediately for orders.

"Go and say 'How d'you do?' to Mr. Castle, Nokomis," said Miss Fielding, pointing at me.

Nokomis dropped to the floor again, and with the dignity of a duchess walked over to where I lay, raised her beautiful eyes to mine, lifted a forepaw and laid it on the bed. I shook it and felt for the dog's neck.

"Now, Nokomis—" Miss Fielding began.

She was down on the instant, went to her mistress and stood waiting, her head on one side, her ears half erect, her tail low.

"Go and bring up Chevalier, please," was the command. Nokomis was off like an arrow, and presently there was a to-do in the yard. By this time I could recognize Nokomis' heavy note among the others. Then

she and a tan-and-black collie came rollicking into the room. Both came immediately up to their mistress.

"Here's Chevalier, Mr. Castle. He's a pretty good show dog, isn't he? He hasn't got a fancy livery, but he's all right, except his tail's set on a bit too high, and there's a little feather to his hind legs below the hock."

Chevalier whined, and looked up at Miss Fielding. I was quite ready to believe the dog understood what she said.

"Oh, that's all right, Chev, you's a booful, good doggie, and I love you! Chevalier's strain harks back to the original Scott—he's quite a swell, in his way, and has got blue ribbons. But they all want tri-colored calico dogs, now. Go over and pay your respects, Chevalier, please!"

The dog came up to me, was patted, and left with Nokomis, who was next instructed to return with John O'Groat, a big dog, almost wholly black, with a rather blunter muzzle than the others.

"John's got pretty good blood, too, and his

mother was from the Lothian Hills, like Norval—no, that was the Grampians. A little hollow-backed, and his forelegs aren't quite straight, but Jack's a good dog, aren't you, Jack? A fine worker, too."

Jack was certainly listening to every word attentively, whether he understood or not. After he had gone, Nokomis brought up Minnehaha, one of her own youngsters, pure white.

"Poor little Minnie," said Miss Fielding, "she's got yellow eyes and a thin coat, but I love her just as much!" Taking the forepaws she held her own face tantalizingly near the dog's tongue. "Just as much, I do. Now go over to Mr. Castle, Miss!"

Last of all came Hiawatha, a frenzied, wriggling, capering puppy, sable-and-white like his mother, yelping, crouching, bounding, hysterical with joy. Miss Fielding and I fell to laughing at his antics, but Hiawatha was too young to care. He was up on top of my bed in half a minute, and stifling me with his eagerness, lapping my face and hands, growl-

ing, snarling, biting, scratching all at once. When this frisky, capering bunch of enthusiasm had departed, quite out of his head with the excitement of the visit, Miss Fielding talked dog for ten minutes. She had not forgotten, however, to compliment her pets with a lump of sugar apiece, filched from my tray and dropped from the window with strict precedence.

"Oh," I said, looking at her with admiration, "I do think your own name is the best! It's so like you."

"What d'you mean?" she asked, coming up to me.

"Why—Joy," I replied.

"Of course it is! Isn't it fun to have a name like that? One has quite to live up to it, though. It inspires me, sometimes, when I'm blue."

"Yes; it has distinction. I don't see why you ever should prefer Edna."

"Oh, Edna—" she said seriously. She waited a moment, to shake from her skirt the sand the dogs' paws had left. "Well, I do

like Edna, sometimes. It depends upon my mood, I suppose. You know I told you I had moods. Don't try to reconcile me, I know I'm inconsistent. But I'm a woman," she added, looking up more brightly, "and I suppose I have that right."

"I haven't decided whether you're a woman or not," I returned. "Sometimes I have thought you were a princess in disguise."

"Oh, that's nice of you! But why?"

"You're so mysterious, so whimsical, so detached, so romantic."

"Take care!" she warned severely. "You aren't trying to swim off the island, are you?"

I opened my eyes at this.

"You still hold me to my promise—after yesterday?"

"Why not?" she said, a little blankly.

"Why, I thought we were well off the island—at least *you* were. I thought that you had given up the game."

"Why?" she asked, looking at me directly,

in seeming surprise. "I think you must have mistaken my meaning."

I couldn't quite get it. "You asked me all sorts of questions, anyway, you know," I ventured.

Her eyes begged for mercy. "I'm sorry if I was impertinent——"

"Oh, I don't mean that, of course. You couldn't be. You had a perfect right to ask, of course."

"Can't I row back in a boat, please?" she pouted whimsically. "Don't give it up yet. Not till I give you specific leave of absence. I suppose I'm spoiled. I want my cake to keep and eat, too."

I was a little relieved at her recognition of her own inconsistency, though I felt a queer hiatus somewhere. It was as if, mentally, I had tried to go up a step where there was none. But I let the subject drop. She took up the books on the stand and began to look them over.

"Don't you think Leah reads beautifully?" she asked.

"It's charming to hear her, but, if you don't mind, I prefer to hear *you.*"

She took all my compliments so graciously, without either embarrassed denial or vanity, that I loved to watch her when I tried a gallantry. Now she only nodded to me, sweepingly, with mock deference, and went on:

"Leah and I disagree somewhat. I have more manner, perhaps, and less rhythm. We read a good deal together. I think she sees Browning much more clearly than I. Perhaps I feel him more keenly."

"She's a remarkable girl—I was going to add 'for a negress,' but I needn't qualify it."

"Oh, no! You don't *know* how fine she is." Seating herself she added, as if to herself, in a sort of sigh: "What that girl has done for me!"

"I am sure that she would say just that of you," I remarked.

"Oh, I try her a good deal, sometimes. Her mother was my nurse. When I sent for Leah, I didn't expect to get anything more than, perhaps, some of the hereditary de-

votion darkies have, even if I got that. But I got a friend. You can't trust her too far, Mr. Castle, believe me! She's pure gold."

It happened that, as she spoke, Leah herself came into the room with letters for me. Miss Fielding took the girl's hand and pressed it against her own cheek affectionately. As she did so, I noticed a peculiar scar—a livid U-shaped mark on Leah's wrist. It was the sort of scar that might be left from the wound of a carving-tool—one of the narrower gouges.

"Was I very horrid yesterday, Leah?" Miss Fielding asked, looking up into the fine brown face.

"Oh, *please,* Miss Joy!" Leah begged uneasily.

"Of course *you* understand, Leah; I only want Mr. Castle to know I'm sorry," Miss Fielding insisted.

"I need only to look at you to be sure you're sorry, and to look at Leah to be sure that there's no need of it," I declared. "At any rate, there's no need of my understand-

ing. In fact that's just what I thought you *didn't* want me to do. Isn't it?"

Leah looked quickly from me to Miss Fielding, and back again.

"Yes, I suppose it is," Miss Fielding said slowly, thoughtfully. "Let's get back on the island again. I'm sure it's big enough for us."

We stayed, therefore, "on the island" all that afternoon, touching, that is, but lightly on personal topics. But though we did not go wide, we went deep enough to make the talk hold us absorbed for an hour or more. In quite another way, I think, we went far, as well. Miss Fielding was a stimulating conversationalist. She made me feel at my best. She had that happy way of meeting me on my ground every little while, then going on, and giving me a hand up to hers, and so, by a series of alternate agreements and divergencies, keeping the discussion both sympathetic and various. In most of this quick give-and-take Leah was a passive listener unless specially appealed to, at which

times she often expressed herself so succinctly and sapiently that Miss Fielding and I looked at her, and then at one another with a comic expression of admiration and depreciation of our own powers.

With such conversation the day went fast. In the afternoon Miss Fielding read to me, and in the evening I spent two or three hours in passive delight listening to her violin.

My pain had almost subsided, now, and I looked forward with something more poignant than regret at being able to be up and about, knowing that would mean the beginning of the end of our companionship.

VI

The next morning Miss Fielding slept late, and her breakfast order was, as it had been two days before, prosaic. Then, also, she had slept late. This coincidence struck me and gave me a presentiment. I looked curiously for the first sight of her to confirm or destroy a theory that I had been incubating during my long night hours alone. The fact that, as I ate my breakfast, I could hear her whistling in her room helped along my hypothesis. So did Leah's apparent mental detachment.

Miss Fielding romped into my room at about half-past nine, and with a laugh and a "Good morning, Chet!" pirouetted up to my bed. My theory instantly gained plausibility. Her manner was what I had anticipated. Her dress, also, was significant.

She had on a fussy sort of silk waist, in-

appropriate, I thought, with her cloth walking-skirt. Her hair was elaborately "marcelled," and she wore bangles that clinked on her wrists; there was the same odor of Santal that I had previously noticed. What was most suggestive was that this get-up was apparently meant to impress me. At least, that was how I interpreted her coquettish smile. I shouldn't care to say that she showed actual poor taste—it was only, I thought, poor taste for *her*. She needed such adjuncts of fashion so little!

"See here," she said, tossing her head and pointing at me dramatically, "you're getting altogether too lazy! I think that you've been in bed long enough. I'm going to get you down-stairs to-day. The doctor said three or four days in bed would do, and now it's five. How do you feel?" She shook the post of my bed with mock ferocity, as if to expend some surplus energy. There seemed to be an extra ounce of blood in her this morning.

"Oh, I'm game!" I replied. "Nothing would suit me better."

"I'll get the library ready, then; Leah and Uncle Jerdon will help you down. Then you can watch me work, if you don't mind. I'm trying to finish my coffret." She felt thoughtfully of her biceps. "I'll get quite a muscle before I'm through. I shall have driven about twelve hundred nails by the time it's done."

She walked to the door, swinging her arms, and called, "Leah! Come up here! Quick!"

Leah appeared, out of breath, as if, for the moment, she had expected that an accident had happened. She gave a quick apprehensive look about.

"Leah, we're going to get Mr. Castle down-stairs to-day. Is Uncle Jerdon about?"

"Do you think Mr. Castle is well enough to be moved, yet?" Leah ventured.

"Didn't I say he was going down-stairs?" Miss Fielding repeated impatiently. "I think we can decide that question. You do as I say. Go and get Uncle Jerdon, and be quick about it, too!"

"She's spoiled. She thinks she runs this house," Miss Fielding complained to me, when Leah had left.

I said nothing, watching her closely. My theory was now pretty well substantiated. I could not pass this scene off as merely one of the "moods" that she and Leah had both mentioned. There was something definitely wrong with Miss Fielding to-day—something more than a mere whim of temper. There had been something wrong two days before, when she had acted similarly. She was distinctly not herself, if her normal self was the graceful, delicate, tactful creature who had first charmed me.

It was not only her mood or her taste in costume that seemed different. It was something not quite describable which seemed to permeate her whole personality. She had taken a chair and sat with her right arm cast up over the back. The angle of her raised elbow threw her into a distinctly awkward position. Her gestures, too, were characteristic of this mysterious difference. When

they were not distinctly imitative, as in mimicking Uncle Jerdon's table-manners, they were irrelevant, mere spasmodic exhibitions of activity—as when she caught the fly, or swung her arms with active tennis-like gestures. This spontaneous irrelevancy she showed now in the way she doubled her fists and brought them athletically to her shoulders, as she talked, or, raising her foot a little, made circles with her toe, showing the slenderness and suppleness of her ankle. I don't say that all this ebullition of high spirits wasn't, in its way, charming. It was. But it was different from the way she had acted yesterday. Perhaps I can best describe it by saying that she seemed quite ten years younger.

She sprang up and, apropos of nothing at all, proceeded to dance or hop sidewise across the room and back hilariously, in sheer excess of vigor. It was what she called "galumphing," and, from time to time, during the day, usually at the end of some little over-serious conversation, she repeated the per-

formance, to my great amusement and delight. It was the absurdly meaningless gamboling of a kid, but it was so delicious in its inconsequence that every time it provoked my laughter.

While we were talking nonsense there, Leah came up with Uncle Jerdon. Uncle Jerdon was distinctly a New England type—the chin-bearded, straw-chewing farmer, quaintly original, confident, droll. He was well on in years, a dried-up, wrinkled, toothless bachelor with sparse, straw-colored hair, long in the neck, and twinkling blue eyes full of good nature. He wore overalls and reeked of the stable.

Miss Fielding introduced him, and I shook his skinny hand.

"Wall," he drawled, "thinkin' abeout movin', be ye? I guess Leah an' me'll make a pretty good elevator. I'll help ye get dressed, fust-off, an' then we'll take ye up tenderly, lift ye with care."

The two women left while I got my clothes on. It felt good to leave the bed.

"We been a-tinkerin' on that air machine o' yourn, but it's a leetle bit too much for us, I guess," Uncle Jerdon said. "You'll have to send deown a man, I expect. I wouldn't ride in one o' them pesky things for all the gold of Ophir, no sirree, bob! When I want to go to ride I want to see the back of a good hoss—I know I'll get home by sun-deown."

He monologued away thus as he helped me into my clothes, and, when I had finished, called to Leah.

She came in, and I took an arm of each, though I scarcely needed their help. We descended a narrow, paneled stairway slowly but safely, without causing me any pain, and turned into a door on the left-hand side of the lower hall. There I found a morris chair ready for me, drawn up before a wide brick fireplace where an oak log was burning. Uncle Jerdon left me with a wink at seeing Leah placing a foot-stool for me and drawing up a taboret on which were cigars and cigarettes. There ensconced, I looked about with interest.

It was a large room, finished all in paneled unvarnished redwood, most beautiful in color—a lighter red than mahogany, with more softness and bloom. Two sides were lined with book-cases, except for the chimney-breast; another was almost filled with a broad bow-window of leaded glass with a deep seat covered with corduroy cushions. There was a narrow shelf supported by carved brackets part way up, and a cornice above that. Between the adzed beams of the ceiling were panels of old Spanish leather, lacquered and stamped. The whole effect was a modified French Renaissance worked out with many charming originalities of detail. The pilasters, and the elaborate mantel with its ornamented moldings and graceful consoles, showed handicraft of an interesting sort. They seemed to have been carved by some artistic amateur, being boldly cut without the machine-like regularity of the professional. There was, besides the unusualness of the wood, much to interest me as an architect.

The library was well filled without appear-

ing crowded, and everything, furniture and appointments, betokened, as had my chamber, not only taste, but luxury. It was evident that Miss Fielding was very well off, and knew how to use her money. It was as evident that she had a strong personality, for there were details that were unique. A large prism of rock-crystal, for instance, carelessly resting in the sunshine upon the dull brown cushions of the window-seat, threw a prismatic spot of splendor upon the ceiling. It was like a gorgeous butterfly pinned to the leather. There was a silver cage of waltzing Japanese mice upon the mantel, little grotesque, pied creatures that spun wheels, washed their necks with their paws and nibbled at rice. The books, too, were arranged upon the shelves apparently not as regards subjects, but rather on account of their bindings, giving masses of color, green and red and brown and black and white.

But it had all been indubitably so well lived in, its properties all ministered so to one's comfort, and the tones were all so restful and

admirably composed, that I could imagine no more charming environment for a rainy day with Miss Fielding.

A great library table stood in the center of the apartment, one end of which was covered with magazines—everything from *The Journal of Abnormal Psychology* to the *Pink 'Un.* Upon the other end, resting on a hide of ooze leather, were scattered tools and materials, and the unfinished chest upon which Miss Fielding had been working. This was covered with young calfskin, the soft hair still on, a pretty brindled tan and white, and it was bound on the edges with brass strips. These were fastened in place by close rows of brass-headed nails, which accounted for the pounding I had heard. I was admiring the workmanlike way in which the chest was made, when Miss Fielding came in.

"What d'you think of my 'bossy coffret'?" she said. "Isn't it going to be a beauty? My own invention. Don't steal the scheme, and I'll show you how."

She stood up to the table, and, taking one

of the brass strips, laid off the divisions and punched holes for the nails, and then hammered it on. She kept up, meanwhile, a running fire of persiflage. Occasionally she would stop to toss her hammer into the air and catch it nimbly by the handle as it fell.

"I thought you were going to call me Edna," she said after a while, pausing with some nails in her mouth to look over at me. "Don't you like the name?"

"I thought *you* didn't like it," I said, my eyes turning from her brisk, clever hands, to her absorbed face. A wave passed over it as I looked—that baffled expression I had noticed before.

"Did I say so?" Her hammer was poised in mid air.

"Why, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. It doesn't matter. Nicknames seldom stick, anyway." She placed a nail in the hole.

"Oh, I don't object to 'Chet' at all."

"'Chet' goes, then." She drove in her nail with a frown.

Before I had thought of my promise, I said: "It's funny you don't remember it!"

Bang, *bang-bang!* Another nail went in, driven viciously.

I fully expected that she would speak of "the island" again, but she didn't. Instead, she dropped her tools, and said:

"I'm building a house, too!"

"Where?" I asked.

She laughed and galumphed across the room and back again without looking at me, before she answered. Then she stopped at the door and called up for Leah to bring down her bunch of keys. When these had come, she knelt in front of the window-seat and unlocked a cupboard below it. From this she brought out a little model house, built of pasteboard, perfect in all its details.

It had windows of mica, behind which were white sashes and lace-paper curtains. The house, an old-fashioned New England homestead, was placed in a little yard of green velvet divided by paths of sandpaper, and set out with toy trees. A child would have loved

it. A fairy would have appropriated it at first sight. As an architect, the model made a great appeal to me. It had charm and atmosphere, good massing, good proportions, detail and color. I complimented her enthusiastically.

She was poking about the little front porch and the platform in the rear, where a miniature ash-barrel stood, adjusting the doors and blinds with her slender forefinger, when she frowned and said:

"Why, some one's broken that tree in front! Leah, have you been touching this house? There's a blind gone, too!"

"No, Miss Joy, I haven't touched it!" Leah protested.

Miss Fielding stamped her foot. "You *must* have! It was all right when I left it here last. Who could have done it, if you didn't?"

Leah grew more and more uneasy, but stood her ground. "Indeed, I didn't touch it, Miss Joy!" she repeated.

"You're all the time meddling with my

things. I've caught you at it before. You know altogether too much. Well, go back to your work now!''

Leah left in silence, and Miss Fielding put back the house and locked it up. A hard look came into her face that I had not seen before.

Her temper passed off almost as soon as it had risen, and she was as gay as before. So until luncheon-time, she worked while I looked over the magazines and talked with her.

We sat, at luncheon, on opposite sides of the table in a long and rather narrow room without windows, lighted by a huge skylight. The walls of this strange place were covered with an old-fashioned imitation tapestry paper whose fanciful patterns consisted of consecutive scenes from *The Lady of the Lake.* Everything about the table was heavy, spotless, valuable and old, from the yellow linen to the hand-made forks and spoons. We were waited upon by King, a smiling, round-faced Chinaman with a cue coiled up on top

of his head, and wearing a snowy white uniform. He moved like a ghost in and out. Leah and Uncle Jerdon I noticed, when the door was opened, eating at a table in the kitchen.

Miss Fielding and I spent the afternoon together in the library. She worked and talked alternately; it appeared that she could not do both at once, and always had to stop with her tool in hand when she spoke to me, like a child. Occasionally she would come over to my chair and seat herself familiarly upon the arm as she joked with me. Then she would spring up, to galumph up and down the room, sidewise, running her hand mischievously through my hair as she passed. I took no notice of the liberty, but I was a little surprised at it. It began to rain that afternoon and by five o'clock it was so dark that Leah came in to light the candles in the silver sconces on the walls. Miss Fielding's spirits were gradually tamed. I asked her to play the violin for me but she refused moodily without excuses.

Our talk fell to books, and I went back to Leah's surprising love for Browning.

"Oh, Leah knows more than is good for her," Miss Fielding said. She was on the window-seat, looking out at the steadily falling rain, her feet curled up under her. "Leah's so educated that she's unhappy; it's a great mistake, that. I can't seem to keep her in her place any more. But really, I don't see any poetry in Browning, do you?"

"Why!" I said, "I thought you were fond of Browning—that you 'felt' him, even if you didn't 'see' him. Didn't Leah do that for you?"

"Leah! Fancy! What d'you mean by 'seeing' and 'feeling' him, anyway?" She turned to me with her chin resting on the curled back of her hand.

"They're your own words," I answered, testily perhaps.

She opened her eyes wider. "Oh, I mean what do *you* mean?"

I didn't answer.

"If I said it," she continued slowly, as if

searching for a plausible excuse, and then giving it up, "I suppose I was trying to impress you. You mustn't expect me to be consistent *all* the time."

"I'll never expect you to be again," I said, now irritated by her contrariness. I suppose I showed it in my tone.

She came right over to me, and took my hand, sitting on the arm of my chair. "Oh, Chet," she pleaded, "don't mind me. I'm a fool, and I know it. I know you don't approve of me any more, but I can't stand it to have you cross with me. I can't bluff you any longer, so I might as well tell you. The fact is, my memory is bad. It's really a disease. Amnesia is the name of it. Now do you see? It isn't my fault, is it? I can't depend upon myself for anything. Sometimes I absolutely forget all about a thing that happened only yesterday. I have great blank spaces in my life when I don't know what has happened. It's perfectly awful! Did you ever hear of any one like that?"

"Do you really mean to tell me that you

forget what you said to me about Browning?" I asked her, taking her hand, for I was filled with a sudden pity.

"Yes, Chet, sure I do!" She rolled my seal ring between her fingers as she looked down.

"And about preferring 'Joy' to 'Edna', too?"

"Oh, did I say that, too? Yes, I forget."

"It doesn't seem possible!" I exclaimed. Then, tentatively, almost fearfully, for it seemed the crux: "And about 'the island'?" I held my breath.

"What 'island'?"

I dropped her hand. It was too much for me. "Oh, never mind." I sighed. "I'm very sorry. But I don't quite see, yet. Has this anything to do with your refusal to play for me?"

She rose, now, and tossed her head back, with that shake I had noticed before. The gesture seemed to be the only link between her two moods, and, for a moment, she seemed to be again the melancholy princess. But the

phase passed instantly, and she grew petulant.

"I don't know how to play well enough. It bores me."

I refused to let her off, however. "Then how about playing chess?"

She shrugged her shoulders and said: "Oh, I haven't got the kind of brain for chess."

My mind leaped over the remark, obviously untrue, to get to the other side of the perversity, where I might see more clearly.

"But it's incredible!" I cried. "How do you get along? How do you account for things? Do you mean to tell me that you can't remember yesterday, for instance? Not even what you did?"

She was growing more and more impatient. "No—sometimes I don't know how much time I've lost at all. You see, it's like being asleep, that's all. That's what Doctor Copin comes down here for."

"Oh, I see!" I exclaimed.

"That, and other things—" she hinted coquettishly.

"Ah?" I raised my eyebrows. "Among the other things, I suppose, is the fact that you're perfectly charming."

"Oh, I don't think he quite ignores that," she laughed, and then, her mood changing, as if it had been pent up by such serious discussion and sought relief, she bounded away and galumphed madly up and down the room, waving her hands.

After dinner we spent the evening by the fire. She had put on an evening gown of black net over silver tissue, in which she looked more like a princess than ever. But it was only the costume now; her demeanor was far from royal. She snuggled herself into a bunch on the fur rug by the hearth, disclosing one slender ankle and a stocking of snaky silver silk. Had she not been so slender and *petite,* I might almost say she sprawled, though her hoidenish abandon was not quite immodest. She had her coffee and a cigarette or two, chattering a steady stream meanwhile. I could get no more about her malady out of her; the subject seemed to an-

After dinner we spent the evening by the fire. *Page 110*

noy her. But I could not get it out of my mind. I went back over what had passed, and found that her explanation accounted for much that had baffled me. Still, it did not account for everything. It did not account, for instance, for the way she now treated me.

She got up, after a while, as if annoyed at my abstraction, and began to roam up and down the room.

"I guess coffee makes me a little drunk," she remarked. I did not quite get the point of this till she stopped behind my chair and ran her fingers through my hair carelessly.

"What a jolly wig you've got, Chet! Your hair is almost as fine as mine."

The familiarity made me, I confess, somewhat uncomfortable. I was neither a prig nor a prude, but her talk of the afternoon had wrought on me. I couldn't quite see my way. I didn't at all like, for instance, what she had said about Doctor Copin's coming down —for more than one reason. Perhaps it was this, more than any instinctive dislike of her unconventionality, that put me on my guard

with her, and made me appear to ignore what I acknowledge, in other circumstances I might have been tempted to take advantage of. For she was distinctly making up to me. I could see that very plainly. She did like me. So I was unchivalrous enough, or chivalrous enough, if you like, to try to keep her at arm's length, though that is putting it rather too strongly.

It was not so easy, though, that night, with the seclusion, the comfortable open fire, the soft lights, and the rain outside. The situation was romantic; I was alone with a pretty girl, prettily gowned, and quite frankly desirous of a little more intimate companionship than I vouchsafed. Somehow I was rather proud of myself, having at that time, after all, such hazy reasons for forbearance. I scarcely need add to this that I was becoming fond of Miss Fielding, in spite of the puzzling mystery about her. She was alluring in any mood. My intuitions, however, were all for caution.

With such distractions the hours flew fast.

The candles burned low and flickered till we talked only by the light of the fire. She told me a good deal of her life as a girl—there were no lapses of memory at that time—how she had been left an orphan and had always been more or less of a hermit thereafter. Part of the time she played with my hand, quite as a child might. Part of the time she sat, her chin at her knees, gazing into the dying flames in the fireplace. Then she would smile, look up suddenly, and quote some nonsense rhyme, or make fun of my discretion. Her body was never quite still; she was nervous and restless. If nothing else about her moved, her toe would be describing little circles on the rug.

She and Leah helped me up-stairs at ten o'clock. Miss Fielding flung me a cheery "Good night, Chet!" and went into her room alone.

A few minutes after, I heard a soft tapping at my door. Leah was there with a jug of milk and some biscuits.

"I thought you might like something to eat,

perhaps, before you went to bed," she said. "Miss Joy forgot to speak of it."

"Thank you, Leah," I said, taking the little tray. I was about to close the door when she gave me a look that delayed me.

"Did you want anything else?" I asked.

"Do you mind if I speak to you for a minute?" she asked. She stopped and listened intently for a moment.

"Leah, where in the world are you?" Miss Fielding called impatiently.

Leah spoke in an undertone to me. "Please wait. I'll be in as soon as I can." Then she went into Miss Fielding's room.

I left my door ajar and sat down by the window. The rain had ceased, and a full moon was breaking through masses of drifting cumulous clouds over the top of the hill behind the house. I could hear the dogs snapping and growling occasionally in their sleep, and below, in his little box of a room off the library, Uncle Jerdon's deep snoring. I must have been there for fifteen minutes before Leah reappeared with her candle. She

shut the door noiselessly and came softly up to my side.

"Mr. Castle, how are you feeling, now?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm afraid I'm getting well," I said, smiling. "Why? Do you think I ought to be leaving?" I asked the question jocosely, but she took it up with seriousness.

"I'm really afraid you'd better, Mr. Castle." She looked me square in the eyes. Her own shone very wide and deep.

"I don't wish to hurry you," she went on, "but it will be much better for you to leave as soon as you can. You'll forgive me for mentioning it, won't you? I hope that you won't think that I don't realize my position; but—I can only say that I am doing what I think is best. If I weren't so sure that you are a gentleman, and a friend of Miss Joy's, I'd never dare mention it. But, oh, there'll be trouble if you stay, and Heaven knows we've had trouble enough." Her voice grew lower at the end of her sentence, and then she breathed poignantly, "Oh, *please* go!"

I felt a pang of self-reproach and a great pity for her. "Oh, I'll go!" I reassured her. "I understand. Or, at least, if I don't quite understand, I'm sure you're quite right. I think I can get away to-morrow morning, if you'll get the carriage for me."

"I'll attend to that. Uncle Jerdon can drive you to the station. And don't, please, mention it to Miss Joy that I spoke to you about it. She may ask you to stay—she likes you, really; but she doesn't know what I know, and I don't dare tell her." She clasped her hands and pressed them closely to her breast in the intensity of her feeling, as she added, "You must help me, Mr. Castle! I have nobody else to turn to."

"Are you sure that I can't help you by staying here?" I asked. "I'll do anything you suggest. Why can't you trust me? I dread to think of your having to fight it out alone, whatever it is."

"Oh, I don't dare to tell—I have no right to tell," she moaned, turning half away, looking down. "Indeed, I wish I might. It's

breaking my heart." She turned to me again with a desperate glance. "We'll get on, somehow."

"The doctor will help you, won't he? Surely you can trust him?"

She gave me a frightened look, and her white teeth shone through her parted lips, gleaming in contrast to her fine dark face. Then her eyes strayed again, and she said, slowly, "Do *you* think he can be trusted?"

"Why not?" I replied, watching her sharply. "How, at any rate, can I tell, after having seen him only once?"

She gave a quick indrawn sigh. "Oh, once was enough for *me!*"

"You mean—that you *don't* trust him?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"I mean I'm not sure that I do." She was speaking slowly now, choosing her words with an effort. "That's quite as bad, isn't it? For I don't know what to do about him. I am afraid that I may make things worse, perhaps."

"You're sure that you can't tell me?"

"Oh, I daren't! If I were only sure, I might, but even then it would be hard." Her voice was plaintive, and yet her accent was decisive.

There was a pause in which I thought of many things. As I waited, uncertain, my eyes stayed on the fine, erect, colored girl before me, so passionately loyal to her mistress, so delicately sensitive to the anomalous part she was playing. Though her resolution had in no way broken down, I could see how she was wrought upon, how difficult a position was hers in that strange house.

"Well," I said finally, "there's of course nothing for me to do, then, but to leave. Miss Fielding has told me explicitly that your judgment can be depended upon. I have no right here, of course; I'm an interloper——"

She put a dark, well-shaped hand on my arm, in timid reproach.

"Yet, I hope you can trust me," I added, not hesitating to clasp that hand in friendship and confidence.

She took it away quickly, but looked at me

with her soul in her dark eyes. "Oh, I'm sure of you!" she said simply.

"You make it very hard for me to go," I ventured.

"I shall think of you," she replied. "I shall long for your strength and judgment. I must think it over, more, and try to decide on a line of action. It may be—I won't promise—that I shall send for you to come down."

"I'll come at a moment's notice!" I exclaimed. "Oh, do let me help in some way!"

"Would you?" She clasped her hands to her breast again and sighed, as if I had really helped her by my promise. Then, "I'm glad to be able to know that. Miss Joy likes you. I think you have a rare sympathy for her condition. It's a relief. Then we'll leave it that way. So you'll go?

"To-morrow morning," I answered.

VII

We met, next morning, in the library, for I could move alone, now, and had gone down early. My hostess, dressed in white duck, was in her most exquisitely graceful mood, quite the delicate, refined, intense woman I had first known.

"Do you really think that it's safe for you to leave to-day?" she asked, when I had announced my intention to her. "I am afraid we shall miss you very much, Mr. Castle. I feel quite as if I had made a friend."

"If you do, it more than repays me for my accident, Miss Fielding. It only remains for you to prove it by permitting me to do something for you."

She smiled quickly. "Stay here a while longer, then!"

"Ah, you know how glad I'd be to! But I really must get back. I've imposed on your hospitality unconscionably, already."

"Oh, well," she turned to the window, "if you're going to pay me the conventional compliments, we won't press it."

"If you knew what an immensely unwarranted interest I've begun to take in you, you'd spare *me*," I replied.

She held out her hand to me, her graceful fingers slightly divergent, exquisitely posed. "Thank you for your gallantry," she said. "You came out of the dark, were literally dumped here, you know, and it has been wonderful that we have understood each other as well as we have." She stayed my interruption, with a wave of her hand. "Oh, I understand you, I think, at least well enough to be sure of you. But, let's be frank—you don't *quite* understand me, yet. You don't quite approve of me. Nevertheless, you like me, and we can be friends. It may indeed be that I shall put you, sometime, to the test, and give you the chance of proving it. Until

that time comes, you'll have to stay on the island, Mr. Castle, I'm afraid."

I saw by these words that she must have forgotten her revelations of the night before. It didn't seem quite fair not to let her know. So, risking her displeasure, I came out with it.

"May I venture to remind you of what you said last night?"

She looked hard at me. "What did I say? What do you mean? About what? We talked of so many things, you know." She was embarrassed, on the defense, watching eagerly my first word of enlightenment.

"About your memory," I prompted.

"My memory? I don't quite recall—" Her lips were parted and her fists closed a little as she waited.

"About your having amnesia, you know."

Her hand went to her heart.

"I only mention it," I said, "because I don't want to take advantage of any ignorance you may have concerning my position —and what I *do* know. If you have forgot-

ten possibly, I think I ought to tell you, for I can't pretend to be on the island when I am not. It seems to me that quite in spite of myself I've got off it. What you said about Doctor Copin——"

She caught me up, now, a little wildly, discarding further attempt at evasion. Her face had suddenly grown white. "What did I say?" she asked.

"Oh, only that he was treating you for the amnesia," I replied. I couldn't possibly repeat the rest of it.

She put her hands to her face for a moment, hiding its expression. Then she withdrew them, compressed her lips, and, tipping her head back a little, shook it with the old gesture, as if to regain control of herself. Then she came up to me and put both her hands on my shoulders.

"It isn't your fault, I know, Mr. Castle. But you *are* off the island, and I'm afraid—that it's all over, now."

"Isn't it really all begun, rather?" I replied.

Her hands dropped to her sides, and she walked away to the window. "Oh, I don't know, I don't know!" she moaned. "You have made me think terrible things. But never mind. I didn't want you to know about me, I hoped we could be friends without. I couldn't risk it, I can't risk it now. You mustn't try to find out, you mustn't even wonder. Just be a little sorry for me—and wait."

She sat down in the broad window-seat, and laid her head back for a moment among the silk pillows, with a wearied settling of her body, closing her eyes. I didn't know what to say or do, so I did nothing, and was silent. She sat up again, took the crystal prism that still lay there, and gazed into it abstractedly, as if she were seeing visions. Then, still holding it, she looked up at me with a far-away smile. It was a new expression I saw on her face; it had the pathetic look of some elf, lost in a strange, terrible land. At last she said, "Come over here, and sit down beside me, please!"

I did so; and, still fondling the prism, which shot prismatic colors into the room, she said, as with great effort:

"Did you ever, in your childhood, read the story of the *White Cat?* It's a fairy tale, you know."

The name had struck me as familiar when she used it before, but I could not recall the story.

"It was one of those tales of the three quests, wasn't it?" I said.

"Yes; there are many variations of the same theme. It is the story of a king and his three sons. The father decided first to leave his throne to the one who would find the smallest dog in the world; then he gave them another quest, to find a piece of cloth that would go through the eye of a needle. Of course, the youngest son won each time, but the king wasn't contented, and for the final test commanded them to find the most beautiful lady in the world."

"And the youngest son won, of course. He always does, but he never plays fair.

He's always helped by a fairy godmother or something."

"Of course. Such are the ethics of Fairyland. This prince was helped by a white cat. While he was on his travels he found her castle in a deep forest, and he was carried in by invisible hands."

"Just like me," I remarked.

She looked at me for a moment with an amusing expression of surprise, and a timid smile crept to her face. "That's so, isn't it? How queer! Why, I'll have to give you my little Hiawatha, to carry it out, won't I? Will you take him?"

"Oh, if you would!" I said. "I'd love to have him. It will be delightful to have something that has belonged to you."

"He's not the smallest dog in the world, but he's yours."

"And the third quest?" I reminded her.

"The third quest was the hardest of all. He came to White Cat's castle again, and he stayed a year. They had a most delightful time together."

"I can understand *that*. Just as we have had."

Her gaze went down to her feet. "Yes, just as we have had here at Midmeadows."

I reached over and took the prism from her hand. I couldn't help wanting to touch her, however casually.

"And of course—you don't need to tell me —he *did* find the fairest lady in the whole world."

She smiled dimly and clasped her hands. "Thank you," she said, not too absorbed to pay me most graciously for my compliment. Then, more seriously, she added, "Yes, I am the White Cat. That is the way you must think of me, when you have gone. The enchanted White Cat!"

I dared not answer. All the peculiar moods she had shown me came up for a new vision. So she knew that something was the matter, something of which her amnesia was only a symptom. She had never come so close to it before. I stooped down, took her hand and carried it to my lips.

"White Cat," I said, "I don't know whether you are enchanted or not, but I know you're enchanting!"

"Be careful I don't scratch you!" she said, a little bitterly.

"Ah, White Cat never did that, I'm sure."

"Yes, once, when she was invisible. The Prince doubted her. Do you know how it ended?" she asked.

"How?"

"White Cat told the Prince that, to destroy the fatal work of the fairies, it was necessary for him to cut off her head and her tail and fling them into the fire." She put her hand gently upon mine. "Would you do that for me, if I asked it?"

I puzzled with it. There was something tragic in her tone, but I was quite at a loss to interpret her symbolism.

"Would it ever come to that? Are you likely to call on me?" I asked her.

She tipped back her head again, shaking away some unpleasant idea.

"Ah, this is only the first quest, you know.

You may never come again to my palace. But *would* you?"

A dreadful meaning came straight from her eyes to mine.

"No, I'm afraid I would not. It would be too terrible!"

She threw off a light laugh, and rose and walked to the book-case beside the chimney. Here she took down an old, tattered, red-covered volume and rapidly turned the pages till she found her place. Then she came back to her seat beside me, and, pointing to the lines, read aloud:

"'I!' exclaimed the Prince. 'Blanchette, my love! I be so barbarous as to kill you! Ah! you would doubtless try my heart; but rest assured it is incapable of forgetting the love and gratitude it owes to you.'

"'No, son of a king,' continued she, 'I do not suspect thee of ingratitude. I know thy worth. It is neither thou nor I who in this affair can control our destiny. Do as I bid thee. We shall both of us begin to be happy, and, on the faith of a cat of reputation and honor, thou wilt acknowledge that I am truly thy friend.'"

"But it ended happily, like all fairy tales. So will yours, I'm sure," I remarked.

She let the book drop wearily. "It must end some way—why not that?"

I clasped her hand. "You must not think of it, Miss Fielding! It appals me."

"Well, I won't speak of it again. But I should be glad to have a friend who would help me, if worst came to worst."

"You forget that, in spite of what I know, I am still on the island, after all; I can't yet judge of such a necessity."

"Well, Leah and I will fight it out."

"You said, once, that I could trust Leah in everything. Do you still mean that?"

"Absolutely. In fact, you can trust her when you're uncertain of me. Do you understand? I can't make it too emphatic."

"I understand," I said.

It was almost time to go now, and so, while I went up-stairs to see that my things were ready, Miss Fielding and Leah got Hiawatha, fixed a collar and chain on him, and put him into the carriage, highly excited at

the prospect of traveling. Leah shook my hand and looked into my eyes with gratitude.

Uncle Jerdon drove up to the front door, and I got in beside him and captured the frisky puppy, who proceeded to bite my hand playfully. It had been arranged that I was to send some one down to repair the automobile, and I permitted myself to hope that I might find in that a sufficient excuse to come back myself. So it was not altogether with a feeling of permanent parting that I finally gave my hand to Miss Fielding.

"Well, good-by, White Cat," I said, as Uncle Jerdon took up the reins.

"Good-by, Prince!" she answered, smiling.

We drove off, and, as we turned into the long lane which led to the highroad, I saw the two women standing in the sunshine, at the front door, and waved a last farewell to them. With all the sinister suggestions that had been crowding upon me, I could not bear to leave them alone. "White Cat White Cat," was still echoing in my ears.

Uncle Jerdon winked at me.

"Lord, she's as crazy as a loon, ain't she?"

"Do you think so?" I asked coldly.

"Plum' crazy. She ought to be into an asylum, and would be, if she had any folks to send her there. But she's a dandy when she's all right, you can bet on that!"

I did not encourage him to go on, and for the rest of the way to the station we talked of his rheumatism and the extravagance of his nephew's second wife.

Part Second

I

My machine had been repaired for a week, but I had not had it brought up to town, when I received a note from Leah. It was dated "Tuesday."

"Come down immediately," she wrote, "if you can think of a plausible pretext, but don't say that I sent for you. Miss Fielding will not ask you, herself, but we need you very much. I trust to you."

I took an early afternoon train the next day, and, finding no one to meet me at the station, engaged a carriage to take me over to Miss Fielding's place. My driver would, I am sure, have been glad to gossip with me upon the lady's affairs, but I headed off all his hints, knowing pretty well from Uncle Jerdon's insinuations what the tenor of the neighborhood talk must be.

Midmeadows was about four miles from

the station, and a half-mile back from the county road. The house was approached by two long lanes overgrown with shrubbery and hazels, one from the seaside on the east, and one from the main road on the north. We took the latter, a wild and tangled wagon-track, filled with stones and hummocks, and worn into deep holes. The boughs of trees constantly scraped across the top of the buggy and often hung low enough to threaten our eyes. Near the house, the lane took a turn round the corner of an extensive, old-fashioned garden of hollyhocks, rose-bushes, poppies and violets, then swung up to the green, eight-paneled front door, with its transom of old bull's-eye panes. The copse came in close to the garden, partly inclosing it on two sides. To the right of the house vegetables were planted, with meadows beyond, and behind, the hill rose almost from the stable. The whole place had a charming natural wildness, and seemed, as indeed it was, miles away from any other human habitation; but it was not

uncared-for; its natural features had been amended and composed with the care of a true artist.

The house itself was long and low, covered with unstained shingles. A great square brick chimney rose from the middle of the gambrel-roof. The lower windows were leaded and built out into wide bays, but they showed above the little-paned sashes of the original building. The front was almost hidden by climbing Cecil Bruner roses, now odorously in bloom. The southern side was lined with a row of geraniums which rose in huge bushes. Here, in the second story, was another bay-window of curious construction, somewhat resembling the stern of an old galleon. It was Miss Fielding's sitting-room, which I had not yet visited.

The place seemed deserted, for not even the dogs were visible. I got out and knocked, while my driver waited curiously to catch what was, probably, a rare glimpse of the mistress of the house.

Joy herself, wearing a white duck sailor

suit, with a red handkerchief knotted about her neck, answered my knock. She held her hand to her eyes to shade them from the rays of the afternoon sun, so that I could not, at first, quite make out her expression. The first thing she showed, after her surprise, was a most cordial satisfaction at seeing me. She did not, apparently, expect me, but my presence delighted her. I saw next that she was in trouble. The very intensity of her welcome alarmed me. The two vertical lines between her brows were deeply cut into her forehead, her lips were quivering, there were dark circles under her eyes.

She drew me quickly into the library, and I saw terror in her look. Her cheeks were pale and wan. Her hand trembled, as it lay on the back of a chair where she leaned.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come!" had been her first speech, murmured in the hall, and it was repeated now as I stood before her. "I am *so* glad you have come! I need you so!"

I had fancied before that her face was one

capable of expressing tragedy—not every woman's is. Tragedy shadowed her face now, giving her a newer, more dramatic beauty so moving that, despite my alarm, I could not help wondering at it.

"You are not well," I exclaimed.

"Oh, well enough—" she replied.

"Something is the matter—what is it?"

"Sit down and I'll try to tell you." She dropped into a chair, with her elbow on the table, letting her cheek fall into the hollow of her palm. Her eyes closed for a moment, the soft, long lashes shading her pale cheek. Then she shook herself and sat erect. "I'm so sleepy!" she moaned. "I haven't slept since night before last."

I sprang up from the window-seat. "Won't you lie down here and rest? Do!" I pleaded.

"Oh, I don't dare! I don't dare!" she cried.

"Tell me what is troubling you, so that I may try to help you!"

She looked up and said, "Leah has gone!"

and she put out a hand that trembled with a despairing gesture.

"Gone?" I repeated. "Where?"

"I don't know where. I don't know when she went. I don't know even why."

"Do you fear she has met with an accident, then?"

"Oh, no, not that. Worse than that!" She spoke helplessly.

"Worse?" I could not understand.

"I mean I think I must have driven her away."

I still could not guess. "Why, how could you have done that? You mean that she took offense at something, perhaps?"

"Oh, I must have made it impossible for her to stay."

"But what did you do? She was devoted to you."

She sprang up and wailed out with bitter vehemence, "Oh, I don't know! I don't *know!* If I only knew, I could do something. But what can I do, now? She's gone. She was my right hand, my eyes, my ears, my memory

—but it's not *that!* It's that I could have been cruel enough to her to drive her away. Where is she? Where could she have gone, do you think? I've waited and waited to hear from her, or for her to come back—two whole days! I didn't go to bed at all last night. I didn't dare, lest she should come while I was asleep."

"You expect her to return, then?"

She was walking up and down the room, her hands clasped behind her back tightly. I could see that she was on the verge of hysteria. She turned to me again, and said:

"Oh, Leah would never abandon me, never! She's too true for that. But she's afraid to come back!"

I went up to her and led her gently to the seat.

"Now," I said, "tell me exactly what has happened."

She broke out again wildly, her face twitching with excitement. "I don't *know!* Don't you *see* I don't know? That's the horror of it! I may have killed her, for all I know!"

"Ah! Do you mean," I began, afraid to say it, "that you've forgotten?"

She stared at me. "Forgotten? Well, you may call it that. Yes, I've forgotten." She put her face into the pillow and began to sob convulsively. After this nervous crisis had spent itself she sat up, wiped her eyes and said with a faint, spectral smile:

"Oh, I'll have to tell you everything, now. I can't bear it any longer. It was bad enough while I had Leah to depend upon, but now I must have somebody to confide in, or I shall go mad—if I haven't already gone mad."

I looked over at the table where I noticed a coffee-pot and a cup on a salver. "How much coffee have you drunk?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Cup after cup. I've been drinking it all day to keep me awake."

"That accounts for your nerves. You must rest. If you sleep a little, you'll get your strength back."

She sprang up suddenly, her gripped fists raised, her head thrown back in a sudden new

access of alarm. "Oh, no, no, no! You don't understand! I *daren't* sleep! I'm afraid—afraid! How do I know what may happen, now when I'm so worn out!"

I had done considerable thinking while I was away, and I had done some reading as well. I was beginning now to make it out, piece by piece, and put it together in an astonishing whole. It was too late, in this crisis, for reserves, too late for me to keep to my promise of not trying to know. The girl was distraught and alone. And, indeed, the door to the cupboard where her skeleton had been hidden was now well ajar.

"You are afraid, you mean, of the *other* one?" I brought it out deliberately.

She stared at me, like a somnambulist.

"Yes," she whispered, "of the 'other one.'"

Then for the first time, and quite unconsciously, I think, she used my name. It seemed so natural to me that I was not surprised.

"Oh, I'm so glad you know, at last, Ches-

ter. I'm so glad that it will be easier to tell you." She put her hand on my arm and looked up at me in tenderest confidence. "Now you know why I called myself the 'White Cat.' "

"Yes, I see. Don't be alarmed. I'll help you. You must calm yourself and we'll find out a way. I know *her,* you know."

"Yes, I know you do. You must tell me all about her, sometime. How you must have hated me!"

"Perhaps I can manage her, but no matter about her, now. We must think it all out, and decide calmly what to do. I'm not afraid. Trust me, and I'll see you through. It will all come out right, I'm sure."

I went on so, purposely iterating such phrases to lull her, and key down the intense strain which wrought upon her. Her eyes kept on me, and I saw my influence work—my suggestion, I might say, since it was purposely hypnotic. Her hysteria made her abnormally sensitive to the treatment. She relaxed her attitude slightly, sighed, and

dropped back among the silken pillows behind her.

"Oh, you're so good!" she breathed. "You *will* help me, I'm sure. You have helped me already! You're so strong—it's such a comfort to have you here!" She reached her hand out shyly and put it in mine, where it lay, small and cold. It was the first time she had done so, except under the direct stress of an earnestness strong enough to rob the act of any personal suggestion. It was a distinct caress, fearless and genuine.

"Now," I said, "begin at the beginning, and tell me all about what has happened."

She took it up again with a new courage. "As I've said, I don't know when Leah left. I only know that when I rang for her yesterday morning she didn't come. I went into her room and she wasn't there. She wasn't down-stairs. King didn't know anything about it."

"Nor Uncle Jerdon?"

"Uncle Jerdon has been away for three days, visiting his nephew, who's ill. You

see, *she*—the other one—was here for two days running. It hasn't happened so for years. So whether it happened, whatever *did* happen, on Monday or Tuesday, I can't tell. Leah might have left either day."

"How do you know that 'the other one' was here for two days?"

"Only because Sunday is the last thing I remember before yesterday morning. The doctor was down then. You know that there's a hiatus when *she's* here—a perfect blank in my memory. I lose time, as *she* does, when *I'm* here."

Her mention of the doctor started a new train of thought, but I put that by for the present, to tell her of the letter I had received from Leah, which made it probable that she had left on Tuesday, the second day of "the other one." The situation was serious enough, I was sure, for me to disobey Leah's injunction to secrecy.

"Oh," said Joy, "that relieves my mind a little. It shows that Leah had a plan, and she must have stayed somewhere near here,

expecting you, though how she happened to miss you, I don't see. It's quite right for you to have told me, for I had already telephoned to you—to-day, after you started. I was surprised to see you appear so soon, for that reason. I was at my wits' end yesterday, but I hated to drag you into this. But what could I do? Doctor Copin has gone out of town for a few days."

"I'm glad you sent for me," I said. "I shan't have to feel that I'm intruding. But now the question is, why doesn't Leah come back? Why didn't she wait for me at the station?"

"She must have been awfully frightened, to have gone away like this," Joy said.

"Perhaps *she* discharged her—I know she complained of Leah a good deal."

"Yes, I've thought of that. But I fear it's even worse."

"In any case, there's no reason why she shouldn't come back, now that 'the other one' has disappeared," I said.

"How can Leah tell?" Joy exclaimed.

"How will she know whether it is I or 'the other one'? We're really the same person, outwardly. There's no difference that she could recognize unless she talked to me. That's what has terrified me."

Then, for the first time, I saw the dilemma. How, indeed, could Leah know? The same woman, the same clothes—but yet, how different! "Have you no sign?" I asked. "Haven't you ever arranged it with Leah so that she can tell?"

"Oh, not for a case like this. It has never been necessary. You see, the change always comes at night, at least always during sleep, so that when I wake up she can tell right off, by asking me what I'll have for breakfast. We've arranged it so that I shall always give a fanciful reply, and let *her* give an obvious commonplace one. But now, Leah daren't come in, for she knows that if I should happen to be 'the other one,' there'll be the same terrible something that happened before—a quarrel, or worse."

"Still, there are some apparent diffe-

ences. You dress differently, it seems to me. You usually wear white. Won't Leah know by her experience of you both?"

"Oh, no; you can't tell. *She's* so whimsical—sometimes she'll do one thing, and sometimes another, like a child. You can't depend on her. She's tricky, too."

"I could tell, I'm sure—by your eyes. Hers are darker, and the pupils are dilated, aren't they, usually?"

"Yes—but Leah daren't come near enough for that, don't you see? Oh, she must be in agony, poor girl! But how do I know? She may be dead!"

"You forget that she has written to me since leaving."

"Oh, yes—that is a relief. But I may have hurt her."

"Oh, Joy! Don't say *you* could have—it was not you, it was Edna."

"Well, how can I tell whether or not I'm responsible?"

"I don't think she would have struck her," I said.

"No? She did once, though. She stabbed Leah with a carving-tool on the wrist. It always sickens me to see that scar. Oh, she has a temper! Poor Leah!"

She lay back on the cushions again and closed her eyes. Her hand had relaxed in mine.

I looked at her, so wearied and pale, and said softly:

"You just drop off to sleep for a little while, and I'll think it over—"

She nerved her body, and pulled herself up.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed. "I'm dying for sleep, but don't you see I can't? If I should fall asleep who would it be that would awake? It might be *she.*"

"By Jove!" I cried, "I hadn't thought of that!"

"I've thought of nothing else. That's why I've stayed up and kept awake while I am so exhausted. If Leah comes back, she must find me here, and not 'the other one.' I must see her and find out what has happened—we must arrange for everything and

decide what plan to adopt to circumvent *her*. Oh, I *must* keep awake!" Even as she spoke her head dropped again heavily.

"You can't tell, then, when the change is likely to come?"

"Sometimes I have a feeling—a premonition—like that night, don't you remember, when I was so blue? I knew that I was going to change. But usually I can't tell. *She* has come lately, about two days in the seven, but irregularly. It's almost always after a deep, heavy sleep. You remember how late *she* used to lie abed? That's what worries me now. I'm absolutely exhausted, and if I do fall asleep, I'll go down deep. So deep, I'm afraid, that I'll change. Can you think what a horror that is to me? I *must* stay up till Leah comes. You must promise to keep me awake by every means in your power. But even then, what are we going to do? How can we arrange a way for Leah to get along with her?"

"That's where I come into the game," I said. "I think I can solve that problem."

"How did you get on with her?" Joy asked timidly. It was quite as if she were asking about another woman, and feared to commit an impertinence. "Do you like her?" she added.

"She's not to be compared to you, of course. But there's much that's likable about her, and at least, we get on beautifully. And so we shall this time, if she'll only let me stay. That's the difficulty."

"Oh, *she'll* let you stay, she'll be only too glad. She likes you, Leah says." Her brows drew together, and I wondered how much she knew.

"Well, then, I'll undertake to make her keep Leah."

"Oh, if you can do that—on any terms—we can stand it, both of us. Leah will suffer anything, I'm sure, rather than leave me."

"One thing more, then—since I must have all the information if I am to do anything—what does *she* know?"

"About me? Nothing, I think. At least she has never been told, I mean—we've al-

ways kept it from her. She thinks she's the only one."

"I don't see how that can be possible!"

"It does seem strange; but then, you know she's mentally undeveloped. In some ways she's a mere child. And then, too, she has never known it to be any different—why should she suspect that there is another personality—that she isn't the real Joy Fielding? She's conscious that she loses time, so to speak, and she thinks it is only the fault of her memory."

I thought it over a while. Then I said: "She wouldn't say much about it to me, and so I didn't quite get her point of view. It baffles me. She must know that she does things in the lapses, even if she doesn't recall them."

"I don't know that she's even aware of that. She may think that she's unconscious, during these lapses, but most likely it is just like dreams. Even if we vaguely remember them, for a moment, we forget them, and they don't seem to have been real—or, per-

haps, they're like delirium, or insane intervals, of which she has no memory. Why, a man may even be simply drunk, and not recall what he has done, and that self is, really, a different personality."

"But," I pursued, "do *you* forget, too?"

"Yes. That is, almost always. At times I have had vague formless memories, as one has of dreams—that's about as much as this second life ever is associated with my normal one—if what I now have *is* the normal —how do I know even that? But I have known about the duality almost from the first, and of course Leah keeps me informed of everything that happens. You see, sometimes I'm not even aware that there *has* been a lapse—I don't realize that it isn't just the next day. Leah tells *her* as little as possible about me. She's easily managed and put off, usually, but somehow of late she seems to have grown stronger. She seems to be developing mentally. It frightens me a little."

"You don't think that anybody has told her, possibly?" I suggested.

"There's nobody to tell her. Of course Leah never would."

"Uncle Jerdon?"

"Oh, he thinks I'm crazy, and he never talks, anyway, I'm sure. He doesn't realize what's happening, for, after all, we're not obviously different; *she* might be taken for me in some queer mood, I mean," she added.

"King?"

"I believe he thinks that I'm possessed of a devil. Which I think I am!" She paused to smile faintly. "Anyway, he minds his own business. I have an idea that he has a reason for wanting to keep quiet."

"Or, lastly, then, the doctor?" I put it hesitatingly, yet I wanted to know what she would say. Her answer was prompt.

"He wouldn't tell, I'm sure. Why, he wants to cure me. It would spoil all chance of that, I think, if *she* knew."

I wasn't so sure of the doctor, after what Leah had said to me, but it would do no good, now, to mention that. She had trouble

enough at present not to worry her with new doubts.

"Then, is it possible that she might have come across some evidence of you, in your writings, or something that would arouse her curiosity?"

"Oh, I think she hasn't the least suspicion. As I said, it must all seem natural enough for her to lose time—she has always done so. Everything is accounted for to her by the fact that she forgets. Of course, I am careful to hide everything that is strictly my own, anything, that is, that *she* would not understand. Leah keeps all my private letters under lock and key. I'm very careful, for I've been on my guard since it first began."

"How long?" I asked.

"Ever since I was thirteen. That's when she came first."

"It's incredible!" I exclaimed. "Of course, I've heard of such multiple personalities, of the celebrated ones, but they've seemed only like queer, improbable cases out of a book—monstrosities. Or I've regarded

them as half-crazed or hysterical or somnambulistic. But *you,* Miss Fielding! You seem so beautifully sane, so poised, so complete—it's like a fairy tale. Oh, you *are* the 'White Cat'! You are under a spell!"

"It's only because I'm not a poor girl that I'm not a mere 'case,' I assure you. You don't know what a life I've led, how every physician I've had has wanted to study me, or put me in a sanatorium or a hospital or an asylum or worse. Yes, if I hadn't the money, I should probably be in a mad-house at this moment. Do you realize how easy it would be for a physician to put me there? From the ordinary point of view, I'm virtually insane part of the time. I have been in great danger, Chester. But, having some money, I have been able to get away from people and seclude myself and retain my freedom—if you call it freedom to be cheated out of part of your natural life! I have had Leah, and she was enough. She understands, she's loyal, and she is, above all, wise and good."

"But the doctor—what about him?"

"Of course I must have a physician at times, and Doctor Copin is a good one, and interested in my case. He has been most kind to me. Of course I *am* interesting, though, psychologically, and he's probably written a monograph about me for some medical society already. But I have him chiefly for medical troubles, and to keep general run of this thing, enough to advise me."

This was rather different from what Edna had led me to believe, so I said:

"He hasn't attempted to treat you for this psychological dissociation?"

"No. He has wanted to. In fact, he's always urging me to allow him to see what he can do, but I won't let him. He wants to hypnotize me—but I don't quite dare—would you?"

"No," I said. "I'd advise you not to. If that's to be done you ought to go to a great specialist."

I thought I had a clue now that would bear

following up, but I decided to think it over a while before I spoke of it.

So intently had we talked, that we had scarcely noticed the darkness which had fallen until King's gong aroused us. Joy rose wearily.

"Would you mind lighting the candles?" she said.

She waited till all the sconces were burning and then, as I went to the window, she said:

"No, leave the shades up, please! I want the windows left so that Leah, if she comes, may look in. I feel somehow that she is near here, that she will come this evening, if she dares."

"Why haven't you been out where she could see you, then? Have you thought to call her?"

She looked at me blankly. "Why, I *haven't* thought of that, have I? But would she dare come?"

"Try it now!" I exclaimed.

"I will!" She went to the front door and threw it open and cried:

"Leah!—Leah!—Leah! Come here! It's all right. I want you, dear!"

There was enough in the scene—the stillness that ensued, the gathering mysterious twilight that shrouded the house, the tragic quaver in Joy's voice—to make me thrill to its dramatic power. She stood there for a few minutes, all in white, waiting, her hands clasped on her breast, vividly illuminated by the candles. But no sound came out of the shadows of the night.

Joy closed the door; then, with quick second thought, she returned to leave it ajar, and came back into the library.

We had moved almost to the dining-room, when, on a sudden whim, she paused, turned and looked toward the window. My own eyes followed hers. There was a dark face peering in—so dark that the whites of the eyes and the teeth were almost all that was visible, though enough to show who it was.

"*Leah!*" Joy cried, and ran again to the

door, crying out hysterically. She called again, but no answer came.

It occurred to me that the excited accents of Joy's voice might well be misleading, and for the first time I thought to try myself. Joy had returned, to throw herself down, sobbing, full length upon the window-seat, her heart breaking with the suspense and disappointment. The strain was too much for her, after her hours of hope and fear. I did not stop to comfort her then, but ran to the doorway and stood in the lighted hall there in plain sight.

"Leah!" I called. "Come here, it's I—Mr. Castle. I want you!"

There was still no reply, but, feeling sure that Leah must be near at hand, I started off vaguely in the dark. I had gone but to the turn of the lane when I heard footsteps, running. Then in a rush Leah was upon me, and had seized my hand.

"Oh, Mr. Castle! I'm so glad you've come—but I was afraid to go in. I was afraid I might make it worse if *she* was there.

Who is it? Tell me quick! Is it my own Miss Joy, or the other?"

"It's Joy," I assured her, "and she's waiting for you. You must come at once."

She paused a moment, evidently wondering if I knew the secret.

"You're sure?" she said. "You know that there are two?"

"Yes—I know everything, now, and this is Joy—*your* Joy!"

She bounded forward, and I with her, stumbling in the dark, into the doorway, to the library. There for a moment she stopped, trembling so violently that her teeth chattered audibly. Joy was still lying stretched out at full length upon the cushions of the window-seat. At the first glance Leah did not see her, but then she ran forward, knelt, and threw her arms about her mistress.

But the next instant, starting back as if she had embraced a corpse, she sprang up and faced me, her eyes opened wide in horror.

"Oh, Mr. Castle, she's *asleep!* Miss Joy's *asleep!*"

II

For a moment I was too surprised to realize the full significance of Leah's cry. Then Joy's own words came back—the wail of her harassed soul—"If I should fall asleep, who would it be that would awake?" There she lay, asleep at last. Her small head lay upon her arm, and her oval face was now flushed, her lips half parted, showing her little blue-white teeth. The crisp white duck blouse moved gently with her breathing—beneath her skirt two tiny red shoes lay one over the other.

As she herself had said, she was so utterly exhausted that she would "go down deep." Dared we awaken her? Certainly not Leah, who, of course, had seen the whole awful possibility on the instant.

I had to decide. What was to be done must be done quickly. If Joy were allowed

to sleep long and deeply we might confidently expect "the other one" to awaken. The question was, could we, perhaps, rouse her before that incomprehensible change had taken place? It seemed to be the only thing to do. I determined, at all events, to take the risk.

Meanwhile, Leah had fallen into a chair, overcome with the disappointment of the situation. She was in a distressing state; her skirt was torn and soiled, her shoes dusty, her waist disheveled. Her black hair was awry; she was hatless. I thought at first that she, too, had fallen asleep from sheer fatigue.

I went to her and laid a hand on her shoulder to rouse her. She started with a frightened jump.

"Leah," I said, "I'm going to awaken Miss Fielding. It's the only thing to do, I think. We may be able to get her again, before she changes. But if not, we must be ready with some plan by which to manage Edna. We must hurry, though. First, tell

me in the fewest possible words what has happened. Joy, of course, didn't know."

Leah had braced herself for the ordeal and was now quick, alert and concise. "She got angry on account of my 'trying to run her,' she said. You see 'the other one' was here for two days. I've always been able to manage her for one day, but the second day she seemed to be much stronger, and it was worse than it has ever been before. She found out that I had burned some of her old clothes—Miss Joy had told me to—and so she discharged me and told me to leave the place immediately. I wouldn't go, and she went into the barn and got a horsewhip and threatened me with it. I was afraid, Mr. Castle! She was in a fearful temper. I was afraid she'd kill me. Then I went. I stayed all night in the Harbor. I wrote to you as soon as I got there, for I couldn't get you on the telephone. Yesterday I hung about the place all day, but she didn't appear, and I was afraid to come in. I positively didn't dare, though I knew it probably

was Miss Joy. To-day I stayed in that old cabin down by the road all day, for I was pretty sure it must be *she* who was here. I was so tired I fell asleep and that's how I missed you, I suppose. I've had hardly anything to eat since yesterday—only a few biscuits I brought with me."

I had been thinking out a plan as I listened, and as soon as she had finished I gave Leah her orders.

"Listen, now. If it is 'the other one' who awakens, I'll tell her that I happened to meet you in the Harbor, and induced you to come back, on my own responsibility. Do you see? I'll manage it; you needn't be afraid. I'll take care of you, and it will be all right. Of course if it is Joy who wakes up, that will be better. But we must act quickly. Can you tell immediately who it is that awakens, Joy or 'the other one'?"

"Oh, we can tell that easily enough, by the way she treats me!"

"Very well, then. You must awaken her now!"

I sat down where I could watch, and Leah went hesitatingly up to her mistress again, and shook her shoulder gently.

"Wake up, Miss Joy!" she said softly, but firmly. "Wake up, you're catching cold, honey."

Joy moaned, turned a little, then drew herself together again drowsily.

"Wake up, Miss Joy, you must have your dinner now!"

She moved again, and muttered, "Oh, I'm so sleepy! Let me go to sleep, Leah, please!"

Again Leah shook her. It seemed cruel to have to bring that exhausted body back to life. "Wake up, Miss Joy. Mr. Castle's here to see you! Wake up!"

She opened her eyes now, and stared vacantly at us. Then her face changed gloriously. She flung her arms round Leah's neck.

"Oh, Leah! Leah! You've come back to me!"

It was some moments before either of the

women was able to speak. They clung to each other, sobbing.

After the first hurried words of explanation were over, Joy went up to her room to wash her face and freshen herself for what was yet to be done. Leah went with her, almost too happy to think of her own sorry appearance. Both came down, after a while, in a change of costume, and went with me into the dining-room where King was patiently waiting to serve the meal so long delayed. Joy showed plainly the ravages which two days of suspense and agony had accomplished, but she was braced mentally by my presence and Leah's return, and in a condition to discuss calmly what was to be done. Leah had also rallied from her collapse, and the dinner brought her strength and courage.

The meal was over before we had settled how Leah could be kept in favor with "the other one"—whom we agreed, hereafter, to call Edna—and we were still uncertain as to our actions in regard to many other compli-

cations which might arise. It depended principally upon the extent of my influence with Edna. To hear Joy discuss these phases of her condition in that other state—her fondness for me, her whims, her weaknesses—gave me a strange sensation. But what struck me as most remarkable in her talk was the sense of justice she always showed in regard to Edna. One might have expected Joy to resent the intrusion of this second personality, so inimical to her own interests, but she never failed to acknowledge Edna's rights. Indeed, her whole attitude was that Edna was strictly another person, rather than some part of herself broken off and endowed with an independent existence—which was my theory of the situation.

I quite lost myself in the subtleties of the case. To know that probably on the morrow I should be face to face with this same woman, in form and feature precisely the same, and yet as different from her, really, as the West is from the East, gave me, in spite

of my effort to concentrate my mind upon the affair, a sort of mental instability which was disconcerting. I could not quite believe that she would or could change. She seemed too real, too normal, if I may qualify such adjectives. And besides all this, I had begun to think of her in another way, which made the prospect of any such change seem unbearable.

Meanwhile, Joy grew steadily sleepier. She roused herself occasionally, by an effort, but would droop the moment she had stopped speaking. Coffee no longer stimulated her. She began to walk up and down the room, leaning on Leah's arm, as if she were fighting off the effects of laudanum. Her suffering was cruel. We had, at last, to resort to strychnia.

So, for another hour we talked, while she became more haggard, more weak. Up and down, up and down the room they went. We talked of seeking the advice of some specialist, here or abroad, of the possibility of a direct appeal to Edna, in the chance of some

compromise to be effected, of Leah's actions should she be peremptorily discharged again, of the prospect of her being able to stay in the vicinity, to return as soon as Joy's own personality had reasserted itself, of the proper method of safeguarding Joy's property, of the possibility of Edna's actually departing from Midmeadows—there were a hundred sides to the subject, and all baffling. There seemed to be nothing to do but to await further developments and see if I myself could not succeed in managing Edna. I rather wondered at the fact that Joy did not once mention the doctor as a possible coöperator with us. It seemed to me that she instinctively distrusted him, though she never permitted herself to say so. It was no doubt her fairness, rather than any conviction of his ability, that prevented.

Finally she stopped, scarcely able to hold herself up, as frail as a wilted flower, and said, with an effort at a smile:

"I'm afraid it's no use, Chester; I'm too far gone to think. I can't control my mind

any longer. I must have sleep. You and Leah will have to settle it together—I'll leave it all to you—I'll agree to whatever you think best. I'm no more use than a baby to-night. Let me be your little sister and tell me what to do. I'm tired, tired—tired."

My heart ached for her. Her mouth was trembling like a child's just before crying, her eyelids hung heavy, all but closed. What she must suffer at the thought of sinking into temporary oblivion and resigning herself to the inevitable possession of "the other one," I could easily imagine. I implored her to go to bed.

When the two women had left, I pulled down the curtains, seated myself in the arm-chair, lighted my pipe and began to think it over.

I had seen Edna but twice, but, from what had happened, I was able to form a fair idea of her character. She was, in the first place, by no means the equal of Joy's true self. Mentally she was less developed; in some respects, as Joy had said, a mere child.

She was inclined to be untidy, full of animal spirits, and constructive, in a mechanical way. She was not fond of animals; not, at least, of the dogs, and the same strain showed itself, I thought, in her prejudice against Leah, as a colored woman. There was something of that lack of charity, also, in the fun she had made of Uncle Jerdon, something of which Joy herself would be incapable. Edna was inclined to be bromic; Joy was indubitably a sulphite. Lastly, there was, I remembered, that hint of—what would I call it? —indiscretion? forwardness?—in the way she had "made up" to me that last evening I spent with her.

Here, perhaps, was a suggestion as to how I might manage her. It was not pleasant; the less so because I must necessarily keep it from both Joy and Leah. From Joy for obvious reasons—I could not think of permitting her to suspect that, even in this other phase, she was in the least lacking in delicacy—from Leah because she was, in her way, finer even than Joy. It would cause

her, in fact, the keener suffering to know that any such thing was going on in the house. And yet I could not quite bear to act, even in these circumstances, secretly. The matter had been left to my judgment; but I could not yet make up my mind what was right. It was a choice of two evils, perhaps, but the thought of permitting even the lesser one to obtain troubled me. In a few words, Edna was apparently fond of me. I didn't care to put it any more strongly than that at present, nor to say that I would admit this basis of friendship as a condition in which I could manage her. But the thought was affording. While I was turning over in my mind this phase of the problem Leah came down.

"She fell asleep while I was undressing her," she said, taking a chair drearily. "I have never seen her so absolutely exhausted. She'll sleep late to-morrow; and," she added with a shudder, "she'll not wake up herself."

"Well, then, we'll have to be prepared for Edna," I replied.

"I'm so afraid of to-morrow!" said Leah.

"Not for myself, you know, Mr. Castle. I'm willing to endure anything. But if she insists upon my leaving here again, what shall I do? I simply *can't* leave Miss Joy! What would she ever do without me?"

"I think I can manage it," I said, though, indeed, I was far from being confident. And then, to draw her out more, I added: "What I'm wondering is, if we hadn't better send for Doctor Copin."

"Oh, don't!" she pleaded. "You must take hold of this alone, Mr. Castle. He's been down here several times since you left, and I'm more afraid of him than ever. More, even, than I am of *her*."

"Why, what has happened?"

"Oh," she cried, "that's just what I don't know. She sent me away usually, and often they were alone together all day. Sometimes they went off on long walks, too."

"With *her*—with Edna, I mean, or with Joy?"

"Oh, with Edna, of course—never with Miss Joy herself."

This gave me more to think about. If she had acted with the doctor as she had with me, a good deal depended upon the kind of man Doctor Copin was.

"You saw nothing, then, to arouse your suspicions?" I asked.

I saw immediately, from her embarrassment, that she had; but she finally said:

"No, nothing to amount to anything, I think." It was easy to see her motive in this denial, I thought. She could not bring herself to say anything that might seem like an accusation of her mistress, even her mistress in this other person. She went on:

"There's another thing that worries me. She's been telephoning to the doctor almost every day. She never did that before, and I can't understand it. I don't think of any reason she can have, for physically she's quite well."

"You mean Edna has?"

"No! Miss Joy herself. Of course Edna does, all the time."

"How long since Joy has been doing so?"

"About two weeks—she began, I think, soon after you left."

"And the doctor has been coming oftener?"

"Yes."

"Does the doctor come usually when Joy is here, or when Edna is?"

"Almost always when it's Edna."

"How does Doctor Copin know when she is here?"

"That's a mystery. I've wondered myself about it, but I don't know."

"Leah," I said, after thinking a while, "do you think you can trust me, whatever you should happen to notice that seems, let us say, a bit too much like what the doctor might be imagined as doing?"

"You mean?" She drew a quick breath. "Oh, *that?* Why should you suggest it? Don't ask me to, please!"

"It would be better than permitting you to be driven away, wouldn't it?" I insisted.

She did not answer.

"I don't say that any such thing will be

necessary," I added, "but I don't want you to be surprised at anything. I don't want, in any way, to be underhanded with you. It seems that you must, in any case, leave it wholly to me. That is, of course, provided there is no one else you can call on."

"Oh, there's nobody else! Miss Joy has no near relatives, and any one we might send for would perhaps be only too glad to have her shipped off to an asylum so that they could get hold of her property. That's what has always complicated it. That's why she lives here alone. It might be, too, why we should watch the doctor himself." She stretched out her hands appealingly to me. "Oh, Mr. Castle, you must have heard of such cases—I'm told they're common. Can't we drive *her* away for ever?"

"The doctor probably knows a good deal more about that than I," I replied. "I think that's probably why he's so much interested. But, if you *don't* trust him, the very fact that he does know so much about the subject makes him the more dangerous. I must have

a talk with him. Do you know when he'll come again?"

"He may be here at any time. There's no telling. I don't think Miss Joy knows, but I have an idea that he may have arranged it with Edna. You can find that out for yourself to-morrow, can't you?"

"I think that I may be able to find out a good deal, if you'll only close your eyes."

Again that quick, indrawn breath, as if she were struck with a sudden pain, and she rose and stood before me.

"Oh, Mr. Castle, I can't help trusting you! I *must* trust you!"

"Will it help you," I said, looking her straight in the eyes, "if I tell you that I like Joy immensely—that, in fact, I'm very, very fond of her?"

She took both of my hands in hers, kneeling before me. "Oh, Mr. Castle!" she cried, "if you only *do!* If I could believe that, it would be such a comfort to me! I've wanted to believe it ever since you first came down. She's so alone—she has no one in the world

but me! She needs you so much! Oh, you could do so much for her!"

"There's nothing, Leah, that I wouldn't do for her, believe me. Nothing! Do you know what that means? It means that I may have to do what she herself would never consent to have me do."

That was as far as I dared to go with the girl; indeed, it was almost as far as I had gone with myself. I could see hints of what it might possibly come to; but just how it would work out, I had no idea. It would be time enough for that, when it *was* time. But, on the whole, Leah was pacified and strengthened by my confession. As she was nearly in a state of collapse, by this time, I sent her to bed, and remained to smoke in the library.

The question was, now, whether Edna wouldn't wonder why I had come down. I had, of course, the excuse of my motor-car to account for that, but I thought it likely that she wouldn't be exigent in the matter of excuses, and would be quite ready, for her own reasons, to welcome me to Midmeadows. At

any rate, I decided that I would stay, whether or no. Joy most certainly wanted me here, now that the White Cat was out of the bag, and I was quite prepared to strain a point, if necessary, to induce Edna to be hospitable.

It was now ten o'clock, and, excited as I was, I found myself in no mood for sleep. So, hearing King grinding coffee in the kitchen, I walked out there to make his acquaintance. As I came in, he looked up and grinned serenely.

"Hello! You come back?" he said affably.

"Yes, I'm back, King," I replied, and stood with my hands in my pockets, watching.

"I thought you come!" he said, nodding his head wisely.

"Oh, you did, did you?" I inquired. "Why?"

He went on automatically with his coffee-mill, still grinning inanely. "You likee Miss Fielding?" he asked audaciously.

"Heap much!" I said, laughing. He laughed with me.

"Aren't you lonesome here, King?" I asked next. "Not many Chinamen around here, are there?"

"Oh, Chinamen no good! All time make tlouble." He poured the ground coffee into a canister and took down a pot.

"There's a Chinese laundry over at the Harbor. Don't you go over there sometimes to smoke a pipe?"

"Aw! No good smoke pipe. More better stay here."

Now this was contrary to the habits of Chinamen as I had known them, and I scented something interesting.

"You no play fan-tan?" I asked.

"Aw! Fan-tan no good," King replied contemptuously. "All time lose heap money. No good!"

He shook his head again as he shook down his fire, poked it, and went to the sink to wash his hands and wipe them on the roller towel. I watched his deft, precise move-

ments; he was like a machine in the accurate way in which he handled everything.

"What tong do you belong to, King?" I asked presently.

He gave me a cunning look.

"What-a-matter you?" he demanded. "What for you want to know?"

"Hip Sing?" I persisted. "See Yup? Sam Yup? What tong?"

"You sabbee China tong?" he asked.

"Oh, sure! You tell me, King. I keep him quiet. I no tell."

"Say!" he exclaimed, approaching me, grinning, "sometime you help me get away?"

"You in trouble, eh? What's the matter? Hatchet-men after you?"

He still grinned in the absurd way Celestials have, when the subject is most serious. "No catchee *me!*" he declared.

"Oh, I see. They're trying to find you, eh? What's the matter? You steal China girl? You take tong money? You kill Sam Yup man, maybe?"

He kept his grin and his secret. "Tha's

all light, no catchee me!" was all I could get out of him. But I thought I had a suspicion as to why he was contented to stay alone, so far from any of his race, and never go to town or even smoke opium or play fan-tan at the Harbor.

III

By the next morning my mind had cleared somewhat, and I rose full of eagerness and interest for what was to come. I looked forward to it, now, as to a play where I myself was to go upon the stage and act a part. I got down-stairs early, to be ready upon the scene.

The day was fine, and I stepped outside, first, to pay a visit to the dogs, who scrambled over me in an ecstasy of delight, crouched, leaped, ran off and returned, exuberant with life and affection. King was outside, watering a patch of flowers, and grinned a welcome. I took a turn down the lane, reveling in the sweet-scented morning air laden with the perfume of the hundreds of rose-bushes in front of the house, and then back, quite tuned up for any emergency.

Leah had not yet appeared, so I went into

the music-room which opened from the hall, opposite the library. Here further evidence of Miss Fielding's taste was evident, though, except perhaps for my own chamber, it was the most formal room in the house, with as fine a collection of Chippendale, Sheraton and Heppelwhite furniture as I have ever seen, and a ceiling plainly a replica of Adam's. The room, in fact, was almost like one of those chambers in show palaces whose entrances are roped off with crimson cords. I felt that I oughtn't to be surprised if, on approaching the harpsichord in the corner, I found upon it a printed card with the legend: *"Défense de toucher."*

While I was looking about, I heard Leah's footsteps hurrying down the stairs. I turned and waited for her, and my glance must have spoken as plainly as any words, for as soon as she saw me she said:

"It's 'the other one,' Mr. Castle. She's up, now. She's telephoning to the doctor."

"How is she?" I asked.

"She's fresh and well enough, but she's in

a bad temper. I had an unpleasant scene with her. She wanted to know why I was here, and I told her what you said—that you had met me and asked me to come back with you. Then she quieted down a little, and asked me when you came and how long you were going to stay. She seemed to be glad that you were here, and it pacified her, but I'm awfully afraid that she'll send me away again!"

"Don't lose courage," I said. "If she's glad to see me, that's a good sign, and it will make it easier for me. But we mustn't seem to be plotting here together. It won't do to arouse her suspicions, whatever we do. You leave it to me, and cheer up!"

With that, I walked into the library and waited. It was not long before I heard Miss Fielding's door open and heard her whistling as she came rollicking down the stairs.

These noises, so thoroughly dissociated from my idea of Joy herself, created unconsciously a mental impression; an expectation that, without thinking of the absurdity of it,

quite unprepared me for the sight of her when she appeared. I don't quite know what I *did* expect—something a bit unfamiliar, unnatural, I suppose—but what I saw was, of course, only the Miss Fielding I had always seen, pretty, slender, exquisite, the same brown-eyed, dark-haired creature as ever, at first glance the same woman whom I had left the night before, only now refreshed and full of life. It gave me a distinct shock. At second glance, it is true, there were almost undefinable, yet perfectly distinguishing marks of the new personality—of Edna; and as I noted them—the carelessness of her hair, her dilated pupils, the rolled-up sleeves of her shirt-waist, the odor of Santal, and above all a refreshing youthfulness—I adjusted myself quickly to the situation.

She came forward with a swinging stride and her hand held out in jovial welcome, smiling. Her grip was like a man's, as she said, "Isn't it dear of you to come down and see me, Chet! I was afraid that you'd got enough of me before and wouldn't ever want

to come back again. I've missed you awfully. Sure, I have!"

She kept the hand I gave her, and swung it playfully. I said something about the automobile.

"I hope you can stay a while, now you've come," she went on. "There are all sorts of things we can do, now you're well, you know. Is your rib all right, now? Can I hug you, if I want to?" She laughed frankly at me.

"I want to talk to you about Leah," I said. "I hope you'll forgive my taking the liberty of bringing her back, but I knew that you would have changed your mind, and would miss her terribly. I thought that, if I brought her back and asked you to keep her, it would save you the embarrassment of sending for her, you know. Of course, you must have her here. You could never find any one who would fit in as well, who knows your ways; and, even if you could, Leah's too fine a girl to let go that way."

Her face clouded and she answered pet-

tishly. "That girl's no good, Chet. She's regularly spying on me. She watches me all the time, and I won't have it. She interferes with my things, too, and she thinks she's too good to be a servant. If she'd only keep her place I wouldn't mind so much, but I won't have a nigger putting on airs with me. I've got to get rid of her!"

"But you can't get along without some one," I protested.

"Oh, yes, I can!"

"Why, even Uncle Jerdon's not here, now."

"Well, there's King."

"King isn't exactly what you'd call a chaperon, is he?"

She laughed and began to galumph up the room and back. "Oh, I don't need one, do I?"

"It seems to me you do if I'm to stay here!"

" 'Fraid-cat, 'fraid-cat!" she taunted, starting off again, sidewise.

I had to laugh, and by a quick inversion

she became serious, coming back to me, her chin up, her hands behind her, jiggling up and down on tip-toes.

"Do you really want me to keep Leah?" she asked.

"I really do," I answered gravely.

"Why?"

"Because I'm fond of you, and I think you ought to have her help."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "*Are* you really fond of me, Chet?"

"Of course I am—when you behave."

"I might try her again," she said thoughtfully.

"She must stay here as long as I do, at least; or else I can't remain."

She inserted her little finger into a buttonhole of my coat and said, without looking up, "Will you stay as long as I keep her, then?" She looked up, now, to smile at her strategy.

"I won't promise that," I replied, "but I shall certainly go if you get rid of her."

"Then I'll keep her. But it will be for you to see that she behaves, Mr. Chet."

With that, she was away again, debonairly frolicsome.

I felt as if I had won the first battle, and could afford to hope that I might manage her. I was, however, skating on pretty thin ice, and it would take considerable skill to keep out of danger if I pursued these tactics much further. I had to encourage her enough to propitiate her and keep her friendly, without letting the affair get away from my control.

She danced into the library again to suggest that we go for a walk, and I followed her outdoors. As we passed the yard in the rear I saw the dogs lying in the sun. We had not got within twenty feet of them when they all rose, laid back their ears and began to growl. Old Nokomis, who had greeted me so affectionately, only a half-hour ago, stood with her brush down, grumbling, her head tilted, her eyes on Miss Fielding.

She turned to King, who was filling a pail at the pump.

"Say, King, you tie up the dogs in the sta-

ble, hear? I won't have them about, barking and growling at me." She made an impatient threatening gesture at Nokomis, who retreated, still watching sharply, till, with an angry yelp, she turned, and ran into the stable. The other collies followed her. It was uncanny.

"I'm going to sell those dogs pretty soon," she remarked carelessly, kicking at a thistle. "I don't see why in the world you wanted that puppy."

"Because you offered him to me," I answered, to see what she would say.

"Take them all, then, if you like," she said. "I confess I'm afraid of them sometimes."

We went along a lane behind the stable and beside a potato patch, and then, rising rapidly, through a gateway to a scrubby hillside, covered with huckleberry bushes and sweet fern. Miss Fielding, for so I must still call her, or you will perhaps forget that she was to all intents and purposes physically the same in this secondary personality, stuck her

hands in the pockets of her red golf-jacket and swung up the path between the boulders, with a frank joyousness and comradeship that seemed as natural in its abandon as the windy air and the sunshine; and yet, mingled with it, was a sort of innocent trickery—the petty ruses of a primitive woman cropping out through a veneer of civilization.

I doubt if I can recall in precisely their order the little things which occurred after that to make me notice as evidences of her pursuit of me, but, as significant of her degree of craft, they amused me mightily. If I mention them, however, it is only fair to me to bear in mind that I regarded her quite as an abnormal phase of womanhood. She was not merely another person in Miss Fielding's guise, she was only the part of a person—a collection of functions sufficiently synthesized to have an independent consciousness and volition, but by no means a perfect whole. This is, I believe, the modern interpretation of multiple personality. Certain definite psychological tracts are split off and run

themselves, so to speak. One might perhaps say that it is as if France, Germany, Austria and Italy should float off the map, and achieve a lesser Europe of their own. The line of cleavage in Miss Fielding's case was chiefly along intellectual and moral lines; Edna was a lesser and, mentally, a younger Joy—less cultured, less conscientious. It was quite in this way that I studied her.

She stopped in the lane before we got to the gate, and, unfastening the little gold chain with a sapphire pendant which she had about her neck, held it out to me.

"Here, would you mind taking this, Chet? Keep it safe for me, please! I'm afraid I may lose it."

I reached for it, but before I could take it she had herself tucked it into my vest pocket and patted the place humorously.

She stopped again, afterward, to ask me to tie her shoe-lace. It was patently one of the many attempts she was always making to establish a closer physical contact, an effort to keep the relation personal. I remember,

also, that not long afterward, having climbed up a sandy bank with my help, and with compliments upon my strength, she stopped at the top to take off that same shoe and empty it of sand, disclosing quite unaffectedly a delicate little foot in a grass-green silk stocking. I helped her also over several stone walls, as she appeared to expect it, smiling to think how often she must have scaled them unassisted. We passed cows of which she professed to be much afraid and clung tightly to me for protection. It all sounds crude enough, but it was prettily done, and I was more amused than critical.

We reached the top of the hill and threw ourselves down on the grass to rest. To the east, the land fell away, mottled with boulders and bushes, with a bunch of trees here and there, and away in the distance was the sea. On the other sides the middle distance was blocked with woods. It was warm and sweet with a fresh earthy smell, and still as a church.

She lay prone and, plucking a blade of

grass, fell to playing with an ant-hill under her nose. I watched her, lazy and peaceful, basking in the June sunshine.

"Have you seen Doctor Copin lately?" I asked.

"No. He may come down to-day, though. I hope he will."

"Oh, you like him, then?" I said, giving my voice the inflections of mock jealousy.

"Not as well as I do you," she said, rolling a little nearer me to tickle my ear with her straw.

"What makes you think he'll come?"

"I telephoned to him this morning, and he said he might. He's just got back to town and wants to see me. He runs down when he likes."

"On business, I suppose?"

"Yes, about my memory. He makes diagram things and tries experiments on me."

I was interested. "Experiments? What kind?"

"Oh, he asks me if I remember things. You see, he tries to tell with his diagram

things just when I shall forget and when I'll remember, and he comes down to fix them up. I don't understand it much, but he says that he's going to cure me."

"Oh, he's going to make you remember everything, I suppose."

"I hope so."

"Do you remember what happened yesterday?" I asked.

"Why, I sent Leah away, didn't I?"

"No, that was three days ago."

"Was it?" she returned, heading off an infuriated ant with her straw. She seemed to take little interest in the subject.

"What did you want me to take back Leah for, anyway?" she asked.

"I think she's honest and devoted. She's thoroughly fine. Do you realize what temptations a girl might have who knew that you forgot things?"

"I suppose she would. I never thought of that." As she spoke she crushed the ant with a twig.

"And Leah's mother was your nurse, too, wasn't she?"

"Yes, but Leah presumes on that and thinks that she can do anything she wants. Doctor Copin doesn't like her, either. He's got another girl he wants me to engage."

I couldn't help exclaiming, "Oh, I hope you won't!"

"Well, perhaps I won't, if you don't want me to, Chet. I was going to ask your advice about it. It'll make the doctor furious, but I don't mind. Poor Doctor Copin! I'm sorry for him, though. He's awfully hard up."

"Why! Is he so poor?" I smelled a mouse.

"He's all the time complaining to me, at any rate."

"I should think you'd be afraid to keep much money in the house. It's such a lonely place for burglars, you know."

"Oh, I don't keep much on hand. But I always have a little. I have a small income. It comes down every month. It's rents or

stocks or something. It's safely invested and I don't bother about it."

It struck me that she took all this rather easily, but I soon found that it was the way she took everything. It had always been that way with her, and she saw nothing strange in it. Her amnesia accounted for everything. I saw how easily she might be led. Impressionable, and with a hasty, wilful temper, one who knew her temperament could soon learn to control her. I began to see how Leah's influence, which had heretofore been potent, might, perhaps, be undermined by the doctor. Here was the next thing to be investigated. But I would have to wait till I had had a talk with him.

She plucked a dandelion and put it into my buttonhole, looking up at me coquettishly as she did so.

"Chet, d'you know, I like you!" she remarked.

"Oh, I'm not a bit offended at that," said I.

"I wish I could make you like me a little."

"You *are* looking for a sinecure, aren't you!"

She returned to her ants and poked at them meditatively.

"I don't know why I tell you such things," she went on. "I've never done so before. But you understand—don't you?"

Oh, yes. I understood. I had heard that sort of thing often enough before.

"I like you because you treat me just as you'd treat a man. You're not always remembering that I'm a woman. The doctor—" She broke off. I understood this, too, but it amazed me to find that she, so far away from the world, could have so easily found the woman's way.

"You've got a perfectly stunning profile," was her next play.

I showed her how, by pressing in the tip of my nose, it could be made decidedly Hebraic in contour. She pulled my hand away with a pretty protest at the outrage to my looks.

Next, she complained that her hair was

"horrid," and that after it was shampooed she could never do anything with it; she calmly took it down and combed it, a fine silken cascade of brown. It was quite beautiful enough to warrant the exhibition, which she ended by plaiting it into two magnificent braids falling below her waist. Finally, she got up and gave me her coat to hold for her while she put it on, a process which she delayed unnecessarily, snuggling slowly into the sleeves and looking coyly up at me over her shoulder. Then she seized my hand, and, before I knew it, had started to run me down the hill. She stumbled and fell—on purpose, I'm confident—and I picked her up. How such contacts and familiarities affected me, considering my growing fondness for Miss Fielding, I leave you to imagine.

We walked down the path as gleefully as children playing truant, and, arrived at the stable, she proposed that we go in to examine my machine, which she was anxious to try. The dogs had been shut up in the harness-room, and as soon as we approached,

they set up a discordant barking. Edna scowled and went to the door to look in.

"Stop that noise!" she commanded irritably. A new chorus assailed her.

She had opened the door only a crack, but, as she spoke, Nokomis wriggled through, forcing it open, and, crouching in front of her, ears laid back, growled angrily. Quick as a flash Edna took up a short whip that stood in the corner and lashed at the bitch. Nokomis was upon her in an instant, and, before I could prevent, had seized her ankle and nipped it severely. Edna screamed and struck again, this time with the butt of the whip, hitting Nokomis squarely on the forehead.

Yelping, Nokomis released her hold and with her tail between her legs dashed out of the stable door and disappeared.

Meanwhile, I had closed the door of the harness-room and had run to Edna. Her face was white, with sudden rage rather than pain. Nokomis had given her only a nip—the skin was not cut.

"I'll have them all shot to-morrow, if I have to do it myself!" she cried.

I did my best to calm her, and in a few moments she had recovered her temper enough to laugh at the episode, though her spite against Nokomis remained. She forgot it in my explanation of the motor, which she examined with great intelligence.

Luncheon was ready when we reached the house and we went into the dining-room. Here it was dim and cool and we fell naturally into a more placid humor. Edna seemed less the impetuous, irresponsible child she had been that forenoon, and I got my first hint of what was characteristic of her in this condition—that, as the day wore on, she seemed to grow steadily older and more developed mentally.

Over her shoulder the tapestry paper showed a picture of the combat between James Fitz-James and Roderick Dhu; behind her the door opened and shut from time to time admitting King with his dainty dishes. He came and went like a ghost, all

in white, while Leah, in a dark gown to-day, hovered like a shadow in the kitchen.

Edna had an amusing and not unpleasant sort of *gaminerie* at table. She was fond of selecting the daintiest, littlest piece of celery from the dish and tossing it over to my plate. She did not hesitate to use her fingers in cunning, unconventional ways, not as if she knew no better, but as if she knew herself to be pretty enough, and charming enough, to invest the solecism with a personal indulgent humor. So she dipped her bread in the gravy audaciously, so she crushed her strawberries with her fork to a red welter of pulp, and added cream with a flourish. She carried it off perfectly; it was quite a distracting sight.

At two o'clock we got out my machine and set out for the station to meet Doctor Copin, she guiding the car according to my instructions. She was an apt pupil, and though the first stretch of rough lane required considerable skill in handling the motor, we got out to the highroad without accident, and put

on top speed. The excitement of it kindled her spirits and a dangerous light shone in her eyes. She was bareheaded and the wind brought a fine glow to her cheeks.

"Isn't it great!" she exclaimed. "I'm going to get a car the first thing I do."

Her touch was clever and firm on the wheel, and she passed from one speed to another and handled the spark like an expert, already. There was no time for much coquetry, now, but I got a glance now and then on the straight level runs. She swung up to the station with style, and my hand, though ready to help her, was not needed. I congratulated her upon her skill and she was pleased as a child.

"Oh, I'm going to show the doctor!" she cried. "You wait till he gets in and I'll give him a run for his money!"

The train appeared in a few minutes, and Doctor Copin, with his professional bag, got out from the parlor-car. He seemed to be much surprised at seeing me. I thought that I detected something like annoyance, too, in

his expression. I wondered if she had not informed him of my being at Midmeadows when she had telephoned in the morning. He greeted me cordially enough, however, inquired as to my condition, made a dull joke about my ribs, and got into the back seat of the car. I kept my place in front beside Edna, coaching her as we went along.

I talked commonplaces to the doctor, who replied laconically, and Edna, being absorbed with her work, kept quiet, her lips closed tightly, her eyes on the road ahead, waiting for her chance to make speed. After we had got a little outside the village there was a sharp up-grade, and I saw her hand fly to the speed lever.

"Be careful how you throw in that clutch," I warned her. "Give it to her easy, now!"

Her thought was all for impressing the doctor with her ability as a *chauffeuse,* however, and she was too impatient. She released the clutch and threw her lever back to second speed. By the time she dropped her clutch back in again, however, the car had

lost momentum, stopped and begun to roll down-hill, the engine still going furiously. The gears meshed, but something had to give under the strain, and with a snap the chain parted. The freed motor shook the car with its velocity. I grabbed the throttle from her, stopped the engine, set the brake, and the car came to a standstill.

"Oh!" she wailed, "I've broken something, haven't I?"

"I'm afraid you have," I answered, laughing. "But I'll see what can be done."

I crawled underneath the car, taking the attitude that has now become classic, and saw that it would be a case of fastening in a new link. I backed out, looked in my tool-box and found that there were no extra links there.

"I can't mend the thing here," I explained. "You and the doctor will have to get out and walk and leave me here. You'd better send some one back with a horse to tow me home."

She almost cried with shame and regret, but there was nothing for it but to do as I

had suggested. I noticed a faint smile on the doctor's thin face. He was undoubtedly glad of the dilemma, as it would temporarily rid him of my company.

"It's too bad I can't sew it up for you," he said dryly. "I'm afraid it will require a capital operation, Castle. You'd better have a consultation with Uncle Jerdon. But if you need any anesthetic to keep it out of pain while you're waiting, I'll lend you my bag."

"Oh, my machine is used to it, you know," I replied. "If you'll only send back the coroner it'll be all right."

"Well, we'll hope for a *change* soon," he said. I verily believe the man meant it for a pun, for he closed one eye as he got it off. Edna giggled.

So they set out and left me. I took a seat, lighted a cigar, and waited as patiently as I could, not at all pleased at the thought of his having a free hour or two with her. At last Uncle Jerdon appeared on the scene, driving a span of horses.

"Hello," he greeted me. "The same old, sweet song, eh? Well, we all have to come to it, sooner or later. You ought to lead a hoss behind when you go. I'd as soon trust to an airship."

He harnessed his team to the car, and we proceeded slowly home. It was a humiliating experience, as it always is, but Uncle Jerdon was plainly hugely amused at my predicament.

"I guess the doctor wan't sorry ye had to stop here alone," he remarked. "He's a-makin' the most of his time, naow, I expect. Nothin' like a little friendly rivalry for a bashful man."

"How long have you been back?" I asked, not caring for his personalities.

"Oh, I jest happened to meet 'em in the north lane as I come. I guess they wan't expectin' to see nobody there, by the way it looked. Miss Fielding ain't so crazy but what she knows what she's abaout sometimes, I tell ye!" At which he went off into an ebullition of silent laughter. This was dis-

quieting enough information, for I could guess what he had seen, though I couldn't afford to encourage him. So I changed the subject.

"How long have you been down here with Miss Fielding?"

"Goin' on two year," he answered.

"I suppose the neighbors talk about her a good deal?"

"I reckon they do! But they don't get nothin' outen me. I sit an' look wise an' chew a straw an' let 'em talk. Lord, how they do try to pump me!"

"Doesn't she ever see any of them?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes, when she's O. K., but she don't encourage 'em callin' much. They think she's so high and mighty, though, that they don't bother her to any great extent."

He proceeded now of his own accord.

"She's happy enough alone, I take it. Lord! I don't mind her at all. I attend to my business and she to hern. It ain't as if I was a woman an' curious, ye know. But when she abuses dumb critters, then I do get

mad. I jes' see ol' Nokomis in the hazels, as I come past. She had her tail atween her laigs, an' I'm afraid that means trouble. I usually see to it that the dogs is got outen the way when she's looney, but I expect Leah must have forgot to attend to 'em. Funny King didn't, either. But it will happen on occasion. Some day they's goin' to be trouble. Ol' Nokomis knows more'n most folks herself. I believe King's crazy, too. He's got a heathen idol in his cabin he's all the time worshipin'. Burns punk-sticks an' a little peanut-oil lamp in front of it, night an' day. But I get my own quiet fun outen it all. I'm satisfied."

We got the car safely home, and I spent the rest of the afternoon, with Uncle Jerdon's assistance, in mending the chain and doing other necessary cleaning and repairs. Miss Fielding and Doctor Copin stayed shut in the library. When I had gone up to my room to clean myself, Leah came in, bearing fresh towels.

"Oh, Mr. Castle, can't you go in and join

them?" she said. "I hate to have them alone for so long—you don't know how I dread it!"

"What are you afraid of?" I asked.

"I don't know! I don't know! Only I don't trust him."

"Have you seen anything more?"

"Enough to make me worried." Then she brought out painfully, "Mr. Castle, do you think we would have any right to—to listen?"

"You mean really to eavesdrop?"

"Yes." There was a look of pain in her eyes. I saw by this confession how far she had gone with her fears.

"I hardly think so, yet," I answered. "It would be pretty hard for us to do, wouldn't it?"

"But you remember that Miss Joy said, last night, that she would leave it all to your judgment. Oughtn't we, to protect her, perhaps, find out just what it is he's doing?"

I thought it over at length. But it was a resource that I couldn't help wanting to leave till the last. After all, it wasn't as bad as

that, yet. Except in Edna's familiarities with me, and Leah's vague fears, I had no reason for fearing anything wrong. All depended upon the doctor's motives in being alone with her. He might, indeed, be making love to her, but then, perhaps he was truly in love; he might even want to marry her. It was a maddening thought for me, but, after all, it was, strictly, none of my business. He had a right to try to woo her, and it couldn't, at any rate, go far without Joy herself becoming aware of it. She would be the first to acknowledge that Edna had a right to permit it. If, however, he were dishonest in his motive, if he were, for instance, after her money, that was quite another matter, and it was obviously my place to interfere. We should have, at least, to see that Edna could not get hold of any property.

Lastly, and this seemed, at that time, most probable, he might only be carrying on a series of experiments with an interesting patient for some technical end. True, Joy had herself refused to permit him to treat her,

and this probably accounted for his devoting himself to Edna; but it was not, so far as I could see, dangerous. My position, therefore, was a delicate one, and I made up my mind to have another talk with Joy before showing my hand in interference.

I went over all this with Leah and she listened attentively. She iterated that she didn't trust Doctor Copin, and that she feared there was danger at hand. I could see that the hint that he might want to marry Edna frightened her most of all.

"How can I tell Miss Joy?" she said. "How can I hint that Edna is too free with him—and all the rest that I suspect? Why, Mr. Castle, if she knew that, it would kill her! But *oughtn't* I tell her? Is it fair for her not to know? It's the most awful situation! I can't bear to think of it! We must save her from herself, though, as well as from the knowledge of herself—do you see?"

She was sensitively alive to the intricate phases of honor that were entangled in the situation, and, showing such fineness and deli-

cacy, I could quite ignore the fact that she was a negress. But that was merely the negative aspect of my admiration for her. From this time on, the more I was thrown with her in the intimate way required by our coöperation, the more I began actually to find in her a positive beauty, a beauty that was truly of her race and type—a beauty that foreshadowed what, were environment to permit its development, her race might in time attain, when, even though the skin were still dark, the features, insensibly modified by mental processes, would lose something of the extravagance of modeling now so repellent to whites.

Such vision came in moments like this, when her spirit was aroused and free. Usually, and always when suffering patiently the contempt or anger of Edna, I saw her only as the personification of loyalty, the loyalty of the hound who licks the hand that smites him. It was then as if her woman's soul were crushed back farther into the figure of the servant. But always those two qualities

were finely blended in her—she was slave and friend, not alternately but at once. One dwelt with the other in perfect peace. No hunchback ever carried his deformity with a nobler grace than she the trial of her color.

Miss Fielding and the doctor remained closeted together till dinner-time, when we three met at table. She was slightly flushed and her eyes were keen and bright. It was as if she somehow saw more—as if she had passed from that curious, mentally apathetic state which I have called childlike, and were inspecting a new world. But this analysis, no doubt, comes from what I learned later rather than from my observation at that time. Perhaps all that impressed me then was that she had, in some way, changed. I could find no way in which to account for the precise degree of difference that I noticed. She was alternately gay and abstracted, at which latter times she fell unconsciously into poses so like those of her normal self—Joy's self—that it gave me, often, a start of surprise.

But, as if to cover all this, the doctor was more than usually jocose in a mechanical way so devoid of real humor that it irritated me. Try as I might, I could not get him to talk seriously. At every remark or question of mine, he threw me off with some nonsensical comment. It was the more maddening because of Edna's inevitable laughter, and it was evident that she thought him a most amusing companion, though to me he seemed wholly without atmosphere or radiation; everything appeared calculated, deliberate. I saw that there could be nothing between us, unless, indeed, it should come to open conflict. He was the sort of man who could, I was well aware, arouse all my antagonism. It was easy enough to see that I was already jealous.

We talked on thus through the meal and then adjourned to the library for our coffee. As we entered I cast a quick look about to see if I could catch any revealing sign. I saw nothing except that the morris chair was drawn up to another, so that the two faced

each other, almost near enough to touch. There were a few sheets of ruled yellow paper on the table. These the doctor took up as he went in, and placed in his pocket.

The talk languishing after a while, we spent the evening at cards, and what with the doctor's sallies and Edna's obvious replies, I think I was never more bored in my life. The only amusing thing about it was the way she played us off, one against the other, twitting the doctor with his remissness when he was not so complimentary as I was to her, and accusing me of a lack of humor when I did not join in their badinage. She distributed her favors impartially, upon the whole, though I caught several indications of some secret understanding between them, which was not surprising, considering the length of their acquaintance. He seemed to enjoy the evening as little as I, and to be a trifle embarrassed, even somewhat anxious. This was evident in the way he watched her covertly, and in the way he headed off all my questions, as if always on the defense. From a

look she gave him, once or twice, I got the idea, also, that his foot was busy, under the table, and that he was using that method of signaling when the conversation got dangerously near whatever it was that he wished to avoid. This interested me considerably for the reason that her other foot was touching mine in a way that assured me of her conscious intention. The situation was as unpleasant as it was extraordinary. I lost myself, at times, in the inconsistency of it—the strangeness of her actions so unattuned to the exquisite body which was wont to house such delicacies of soul. She had indubitably changed from those first whimsical madcap moods of the morning. Somehow her personality had deepened; it had grown in strength and color; it was more assertive. She was no longer carelessly, thoughtlessly frank and forward, she had some definite motive.

Her coquetry and raillery lasted, thus, till ten o'clock, when she excused herself and went up to her room. The doctor and I re-

mained in the library. I determined to cross swords with him.

"I'd like to know what you make of Miss Fielding's case," I began. "Anything, that is, that you can tell me with propriety. I confess I'm much interested in it."

He got up, long and thin, put his hands behind him under his coat-tails, and stood backing the fireplace.

"Oh, I know what *you're* interested in!" he said with his grin.

"Do you think there's any chance of her recovering?" I said, ignoring his sarcasm.

"What's she lost?" he asked.

"Why, herself, hasn't she? To-day, at least."

"Oh, she'll find that to-morrow, I expect!" He balanced himself on his toes and smoked complacently.

I might as well stop there, I knew, but at the risk of being impertinent I was bound to see what I could get out of him.

"Have you found any law governing these alternations?"

"Why, yes; I have good reason to believe they come in turn—first one and then the other."

I got up. I fancy he came as near to receiving a blow on the point of the chin that moment, as he ever did in his life. But I held myself in check.

"Of course, if you think that it's none of my business, I'll ask you no more questions," I said angrily.

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" He shook his head with a deprecatory wave. "Only sometimes it's easier to ask questions than to answer them. This is a common enough case, as you know, if you know anything about psychology. A mild form of mania; that's all."

"Do you mean to say that you consider it merely insanity?" I demanded.

"Oh, we're all insane, more or less," he pursued in his maddening, non-committal way. "Insanity is a relative term, you know. 'All the world is queer but thee and me, and even thee's a little queer,' as the old Quaker said."

"I'd like to know what you make of Miss Fielding's case." *Page 221*

I did my best to keep my temper. "It's very unfortunate, at all events."

"Oh, I don't know. We can't have too many of such fine women as Miss Fielding, can we? I'm sure I'd like to know a half-dozen of them!"

"You must confess it's hard on her."

"Oh, it gives her something interesting to think about. All alone here, you know." He waved his long arm comprehensively over the scene.

"But aren't you trying to do anything for her? She surely wants to get over it." I was determined to push him into some definite statement. But it was no use.

"Oh, she'll come out all right," he replied, yawning behind his palm.

"She's too fine a woman, as you say; she has too fine a character, too fine a mind—" I began in protest.

"My dear Mr. Castle, women are always changing their minds." His shoulders shook as he laughed silently at his own joke.

"You'll change yours, before I've finished

with you," I said to myself. But there was no use continuing the dialogue, and, bidding him good night, I went up to bed. Leah had given her own room up to him and she spent the night in Miss Fielding's study. I heard him come stumbling up at midnight.

IV

It was with a feeling of great relief that, next morning, I heard the dogs barking jubilantly in the yard, answering, each in turn, to their names. Nokomis, I knew by her heavy note, had returned to the house. Joy was, then, herself.

This was better than I had dared to hope. My suspicions in regard to the doctor were now strengthened and I felt intuitively that, in some way, his presence at Midmeadows accounted for the increasing frequency of Edna's visitations.

The last three days had shown regular alternations of personality, but I recalled the fact that on both Monday and Tuesday it had been Edna who had possessed Miss Fielding's body. With this thought came also the recollection of Joy's unusual actions in telephoning to the doctor.

The two facts seemed to indicate a significant relation—a relation, perhaps, of cause and effect. A third hint came—that such anomalous states of personality were sometimes developed during hypnosis—and the three separate thoughts snapped together, crystallizing into an idea. Had not Doctor Copin hypnotized Edna, and given her the post-hypnotic suggestion that she, in Joy's person, should telephone to him in the morning? It seemed probable, for I could not doubt, now, that it was to the doctor's interest to keep Miss Fielding as long and as often as possible in her secondary state, as Edna. As Edna she was impressible and easily managed to his ends. Edna invited him and welcomed him to Midmeadows, while Joy was cold and reserved. Everything that had happened dovetailed into my hypothesis—his annoyance at my presence, as the especial friend of Joy, and his own particular cultivation of Edna—the proof, in fact, seemed conclusive. What, then, was he trying to do?

I went down early and found him, lean and lank in his suit of muddy brown, wandering about outside, his long hands clasped behind his back. He greeted me civilly enough, but without warmth. I did not disturb him in his mood, and he meandered up and down, turning over a stone with his foot now and then, stooping to pluck a flower and sniff it thoughtfully, humming a tune to himself as he strolled.

Leah came to the doorway, gave me a happy look, nodded meaningly, and passed up stairs with Miss Fielding's tray. I went back to the stable to see the collies. Nokomis bounded up to me and nuzzled my hand. Her forehead showed a scar where the whip handle had struck her, and I talked to her about it condolently, in canine gutturals. We seemed to understand each other perfectly.

At half-past eight Leah called me in to breakfast. I found Doctor Copin already at table.

"Going up to town to-day, Castle?" he asked, tucking his serviette into his collar.

"No, I hadn't thought of it," I said, sitting down.

"H'm!" he ejaculated thoughtfully. "I didn't know but we might be taking the same train."

"Oh, I think I'll try my machine when I leave," I said.

He grinned. "Haven't you had enough ground-and-lofty tumbling yet?"

"Oh, I'm game. It's such fools as I that keep you fellows busy; you ought to encourage us."

He smiled dryly. "How long do you expect to be down here?"

The boot was on the other foot, now, and I was amused at his interrogation.

"I have some business to talk over with Miss Fielding," I said. "It depends largely upon her how long I remain."

"H'm!" He went on with his breakfast.

When Miss Fielding came into the room my first glance would have told me that it was Joy herself, even if I had not been given the hint already. As Edna, one would have

called her pretty—as Joy she was beautiful. The lines of thought and care had returned to her face, but they did but emphasize the richness and meaning of her character, replacing abandon with subtlety. I watched the doctor's eyes leap at her, and then fall, disappointed. He, too, knew in a glance. He seemed to be surprised as well as disappointed. Leah had evidently not told him, and he had not dared ask. He shrugged his shoulders almost imperceptibly as we both rose to meet her.

"Good morning, doctor!" she said, giving him her hand, smiling. "I've just done a funny thing! Leah told me that you were here, of course, when I waked up, but I forgot it so completely that I've been trying to ring you up on the telephone."

I saw his pale blue eyes grow narrower as he laughed with her. He was pleased. "Well, did you get me?" he said.

"Are there two of you, too?" she returned, and the thing passed off in a general smile.

I took it that she had already heard from

Leah of what had happened yesterday and I could not help admiring her calmness and self-restraint. The last thing, of course, that she could remember would be her anguish of two days when we were all so agitated over Leah's absence and dramatic return, and that weary vigil in the library trying to keep awake. Joy was used to these lapses; she had been so long schooled by her changes that she was usually poised outwardly and calm, ready for any emergency, on her guard against betraying surprise; but I could not help picturing to myself the nervous excitement of her awakening when her memory first rushed back and she had to learn hurriedly the history of the day before. How much, I wondered, had Leah told her?

Her attitude toward Doctor Copin, while quite that of an old friend, was so different from what it had been the night before that he must have felt somewhat uncomfortable at my seeing it. Of any such difference Joy was herself quite unconscious, but the interest she plainly showed in me served to

heighten it. She was still full of gratitude toward me for what I had done in bringing Leah back—the doctor, on the other hand, was only making one of his periodical calls; she was anticipating, also, his urging again his request to give her a definite course of treatment, a thing she had steadily opposed. He came, as I understood it, only to keep track of her disorder in a general way, and to advise her with regard to it; and it was, so far, more because she had not enough confidence in his proficiency in this special subject, rather than any innate distrust of his character, that had impelled her to refuse a course of hypnotic treatment.

His elaborate wit failed to receive much encouragement from Joy. The conversation was, therefore, a little stiff for some time, and resulted finally in a dialogue between Joy and me, the doctor maintaining a silence almost surly.

After breakfast, however, she took him into the library for a short colloquy before it was time for him to leave. I waited out-

doors. They came out in a few minutes, she, I saw, a little disturbed, a frown on her face. Uncle Jerdon drove up in the carriage and the doctor got in, bade us a conventional farewell, and was carried off.

We sat there for a while without talk, Joy gazing straight ahead of her, absorbed in her own thoughts. Then she turned to me and said:

"Edna is coming oftener than she used to. I don't like it!"

"Did you speak of it to the doctor?"

"Yes. He tried to reassure me. But I'm still uneasy. It was bad enough before, to lose two days a week, but if I'm to be robbed of half my time, it will be unbearable."

"Did you ask him if he thought he could prevent it, in any way?"

"Yes, and he asked me again to let him hypnotize me."

"Oh, I hope you refused!"

"Why?" she demanded, turning quickly to me. "I've refused only because I didn't consider him able enough—I was afraid to

experiment, to put myself into his power, alone as I am here, and without friends. I wasn't quite sure enough of him. Have you any other reason why I shouldn't? He said that he could inhibit Edna's appearance, if I let him hypnotize me. He said she ought to be sent back to where she came from, and that he wanted to 'wake me up,' as he expressed it—make me normal again."

"Then he lied!" I remarked decidedly.

"Oh, Chester, you don't know how you frighten me! If I can't depend upon Doctor Copin, a physician, where can I look for help, and for protection against *her?* You have done much for me, but you're only a layman, after all; what I need is professional advice."

"Yes, of course," I said. "It is impertinent of me—it's positive audacity, to think I can help you, but, don't you see, the doctor, if he *isn't* to be trusted, is the more dangerous because of his knowledge? He can do you positive harm."

"Why do you distrust him?" she insisted.

"I must have specific reason before I dare even to disregard his orders."

"Very well, then," I said. "But I may seem more than impertinent—even inquisitive."

She made a fine, impatient gesture. "Oh, we've got beyond such considerations—tell me!"

I turned to the door and called Leah, who came out immediately.

"Leah," I said, "do you know how much money Miss Fielding had in the house yesterday?"

"Forty dollars, exactly."

"Will you please find out how much of that is left, now?"

She ran up-stairs, while we waited. She returned in a few minutes with Joy's purse.

"There's only fifteen dollars here," she said, showing the money.

"And it wasn't spent for anything you know of?"

"There's no possible way of spending it," she answered.

"Then there's twenty-five dollars to account for. Doctor Copin undoubtedly has it. Are you in the habit of paying him cash, Joy?"

"Oh, no. Always by check, and, of course, *I* settle all his bills; that's understood between us. Edna can't draw any checks, anyway, for her handwriting is quite different from mine. What could she have given him the money for? Perhaps she didn't—how can we tell? Perhaps she hid it somewhere."

Leah interposed. "Oh, no, Miss Joy, the purse was in your room all the time, I'm sure."

"It may have been justified—it's barely possible," I said. "But yesterday Edna told me that the doctor was always complaining of being hard up. What else would he harp on that for, if not to borrow from her? Frankly, it's my opinion that he does. You know how impressionable and impulsive she is—any one with tact can easily manage her."

Joy stared at me. "Oh, that implies, too, considerable intimacy, doesn't it? Much more than I have with him, at least."

"It certainly does," I replied.

She caught the inflection I put into the remark. "Do you mean—?" She stopped suddenly.

"I mean that he is not above suspicion; that we should watch him."

"I'll never let him come down here again," she cried. "I'll dismiss him!"

"We must go slow," I said. "We must be surer, first; and, besides, you forget that Edna likes him."

A look of pain came to her face. "She *likes* him?" she repeated.

"He cajoles her. She flirts with him, perhaps. At any rate, I doubt if she'll refuse him admittance."

She rose and began to walk up and down the gravel walk. "What shall we do? What shall we do?" she exclaimed, extending her hands toward me. "Why, he *is* dangerous! Chester, I'm positively afraid, now.

It's too horrible. It's getting worse every day!"

"Tell me," I said, "why have you been telephoning to him every day or so, Joy? You never used to, Leah says."

She looked blankly at me. "I don't know, I'm sure. It's funny, but I never thought much about any particular message. I suppose I was simply a little lonely and it occurred to me to ring him up, that's all."

That was enough for me, and I didn't explain the reason for my question. She had no time to worry about it, at any rate, for just then Leah, who had been listening silently, put in:

"Miss Joy, do you know what became of that little gold chain of yours with the sapphire pendant? Edna wore it yesterday, but I can't find it anywhere."

"Maybe it's up in my room somewhere," Joy answered, still walking up and down the path. Then suddenly stopping she faced me.

"Oh! Do you suppose she could have given *that* to the doctor, too?" she exclaimed.

I laughed. "No, she gave that to me to keep for her," I said, and I drew it forth from my vest pocket where it had remained since the little scene behind the stable.

Joy's eyes had followed my hand and fixed on the chain as I held it out. Her lips opened with a swift intake of air as she gazed. The two vertical lines appeared in her forehead. She put out a hand tentatively, but did not touch the ornament. It was as if she were in a trance. Then her lips moved automatically.

"*Keep it—safe—for me, please!*" she whispered. Suddenly her hand went to her forehead. "Oh, what *was* it?" she cried.

"Try to recall the rest!" I commanded, watching her sharply.

She thought a moment, then shook her head decidedly. "No, it's gone now," she said.

"You can get nothing more?" was my suggestion.

"Nothing. It was like a dream, like something I had done and said before. What does it mean—do you know?"

"It's precisely what you did say—what Edna said, that is—yesterday."

For some time she was too bewildered to speak, and stood staring at me—through me. "You mean that Edna said what I've just said?" she asked.

"Yes." I handed the chain to her.

She put it away with a sharp gesture. "Oh, no! If she gave it to you, keep it! I have no right—" She turned away.

"But it was only to keep till we got home," I explained.

She looked at me keenly and threw back her shoulders proudly. "No, it wasn't. She meant you to have it."

"You remember it, then?"

She smiled sadly, pityingly. "No. But I'm a woman, and I know."

Walking away to a rose-bush, she plucked a bud and returned slowly, as if to hide some emotion. It was quite time to comfort her.

"Joy," I said, taking her hand and bringing her to the steps again, "I have been doing a good deal of thinking, and I have a

theory that I'd like to prove. I'd rather not say anything about it till I'm sure of it, but when I am, I'll tell you. Have I your permission to use my own judgment, even to the point, perhaps, of eavesdropping?"

"Oh, is that necessary, do you think?" She clasped her hands nervously at the thought. "I don't know. It's all so mixed up in my mind. Who can settle the ethics of a case like this?"

"It may come to a fight between you and Edna, I think."

"Oh, that's what it *has* come to!" she exclaimed. "That's what is killing me. Who *is* Edna? Where did she come from? Where does she belong? I must be fair—I want to be just to her, however she treats me. If I could only see her or hear her—if we could only communicate in some way, there might be an agreement. But she's like a ghost—a character in a book. Is she a different person, or only some phase of myself? Dare I come into open conflict with her? Why, I may be only destroying myself! I

have to be *she,* don't I? Shan't I have to bear whatever I do to her? How do I know what danger may lie in any action I may take?"

"Yes," I replied, "I've thought of all that. I'm convinced that, as the doctor says, it's only a case of 'waking you up.' It's as if you were a somnambulist—walking in your sleep—dreaming half the time, irresponsibly. To wake you up may be uncomfortable for her. It may be like a surgical operation that she has to suffer, but when it's over you'll regain your health and reason, and, by the same token, so will she, and you'll forget all the pain. However, it hasn't come to that yet. What I want, now, is the right to explore, investigate, examine, experiment, perhaps, and then, when I have decided for myself, we can decide what course to adopt. If you're the White Cat, I'm going to be the Prince, and save you!"

She took my hand and pressed it affectionately.

"I trust you, Chester, and I'll agree to

anything you think best. I feel as if I were being drawn into a maelstrom. Oh, what wouldn't I give to be just a normal, natural person, like every one else! Why am I tormented so? Yes, you *must* help me, Prince!"

"Well, then, now we'll talk no more of it for a while. Let's forget it, and go and see the collies."

Her face cleared and she sprang up, tossed back her head with her characteristic gesture and went with me to the stable. The dogs were all out in the sun, and as soon as we appeared they surrounded us joyfully. Nokomis walked up to Joy in her stately way and offered a paw.

"Why, Nokomis!" Joy exclaimed, "how did you get this awful cut on your head? We must attend to it immediately! Chester, won't you go in and get me some water and some salve? Leah will give them to you."

When I came back she was sitting on the ground with the dog's head on her lap. Nokomis' deep brown, soft eyes looked up

gratefully while the wound was washed and dressed. The tears actually came to my eyes at the sight. The scene of yesterday, when these two were arrayed against each other, seemed impossible. It should go without saying that I made no mention of it to Joy, for it was evident that she had no idea of Edna's treatment of the collies.

"Now, Nokomis," Joy said, getting up and shaking the dust off her skirt, "listen! I want you to go in the *house* and get my *golf-jacket,* and *bring* it to me." She spoke very distinctly, accenting the important words. Nokomis trotted to the kitchen door, barked sharply, and was admitted.

"I'm educating her," Joy explained to me. "I want to see how far I can get her to understand what I say. This is rather a test, for there are at least three related ideas, the house, the jacket and bringing it back. But she's extraordinary at picking up words; she has really quite a vocabulary. Of course, you hear a good many stories of the intelligence of collies, but I've never heard of their

being systematically trained except in a utilitarian way. I'm experimenting with more and more complex ideas. I hate the ordinary dog tricks; they're undignified and unworthy. I'm tremendously interested in animal psychology. Queer, isn't it, when I can't even handle my own!"

Nokomis appeared, in a distressed frame of mind, and whined.

"Well, Noko, what's the matter? Can't you find it?"

Nokomis barked, ran a few steps towards the house, and returned.

"All right, we'll go in and see what's the matter."

So we followed her into the house. The red golf-coat that Edna had worn yesterday was hanging upon a hat-stand in the hall. Nokomis went to it, shook it with her teeth, turned round and whined. It was as near talking as a dog could do.

"Oh, I see," said Joy. "You got the house and the coat all right, but you thought I meant just to come back, did you? No, *bring,*

Nokomis, *bring, bring, bring!*" As she spoke, she placed the jacket in Nokomis' teeth and showed her what was meant. "Next time you'll know. won't you?" she said.

"Now we'll try your number lesson," Joy said as we went back to the stable. She and I sat down on a watering-trough, while Nokomis waited, her head tipped, her ears straight up, with the soft silky tips drooping like tassels. Her sloping eyes were quick and canny.

"One!" said Joy.

A single bark from Nokomis.

"Two!"

Correct, again.

"Three!"

Still correct.

"Four!"

Nokomis was perfect.

"Five!"

Four barks, then, after a pause, another.

"Six!"

This was too much for the collie. She

barked, I think, eight times, having quite lost her head.

"Pretty good, isn't it?" said Joy, as I congratulated Nokomis—on the neck, at the spot dogs love. "This is straight culture, you know, no trick. I don't give her any sign, as they do stage dogs. I'm just trying to see how far she can go. I've begun, too, to teach her colors, but I haven't succeeded very well."

"It's immensely interesting," I said. "I wonder why collies are so much more intelligent than other dogs."

"They aren't. Caniches are fully as bright, but collies have been trained for generations with the sheep, and it has raised the level of perception. That's why I try to keep up their education, for of course they'll deteriorate if they're only bred for exhibition purposes. But the training of the shepherds isn't everything. My theory is that the reason why a collie is quicker is because his eyes are trained. Most dogs, you know, won't use their eyes if they can use their

noses or their ears. Hunting dogs will run past quarry that's in plain sight, following a scent without looking. A collie has to watch his sheep sharply, and his eye is developed. Their ears have been trained, too, by the shepherds."

"How long would Nokomis keep this up, obeying your orders?"

Nokomis, who had been resting inattentively, looked up immediately.

"As long as I asked her to—wouldn't you, old girl?" Joy rubbed the dog's neck with her toe. "A dog's chief joy is to be in some way, in as many ways as possible, a part of his master. I never knew Nokomis to tire of doing anything that kept up and accented that relation. It is the mainspring of a good dog's life—it accounts for a dog's devotion. It's trite enough to say, but there is no love on earth so sure as a dog's love. It's unending! it's unchangeable!"

Did Nokomis know, as she watched her mistress there, of that strange soul that stole into the girl's form at night? Did she an-

swer for herself instinctively, with an animal's secret prescience, the question that Joy had asked in anguish— "Who is Edna?" The thought came into my mind as I heard Joy's words, pathetic in their unconsciousness of how the love of Nokomis waxed and waned with her own obsession. Surely Nokomis was loyal and true. Surely she had never betrayed her mistress' confidence. Perhaps the collie alone knew the secret of the White Cat.

We took Nokomis with us, and walked over the hill as we had walked the day before. "We," I say, for, had any spectator been on the hillside to watch us pass on both days he could have seen no difference in the couple. With me was the same gracile creature abounding with life and beauty, the same small, brown-haired, brown-eyed woman with the flower-like hands.

But I need not say how different she was in talk, in gesture, in her mental attitude toward me. Yet, though I have shown Joy as intense, even as melancholy, this was not

her natural quality. She could be as gay and debonair as Edna, but it was vivacity of a different key. Her laugh was as light and ringing, but it was provoked by other occasions. Her sallies were as joyous, but they sparkled with wit and comprehension. She was as frank, but she was keen as well. So it was not so much the sunny-dewy as against the quiet-shadowy, as it was April rivaled by June.

After luncheon with Leah, we went up to Joy's private sitting-room, or study, as she called it—and it was really that, as I saw by the books which lined its walls. She had indeed time enough to read them! It was a woman's room, but it was expressive of virility as well as taste. Like most of the other rooms, except the sleeping chambers and the dining-room, it was paneled to the ceiling—Joy confessed that she disliked plaster even when covered with paper. The wood here was a beautifully grained poplar and the general air of lightness and coolness was helped by the high, irregular, ceiled

roof whose beams and ties stretched across from wall to wall. The ship-like bay-window which I had noticed from the outside was a nest of cushions of all colors of the rainbow —I speak literally—varying from violet, through blue, green, yellow and orange to red and purple again. There was a great table here where I saw a large microscope and case of slides. An upright piano stood in a corner. I noticed also a typewriter, and a camera on a tripod. The place had an air of work and study quite different from Edna's clutter and disorder. It showed me in a glance how it had been possible for her to live alone, so far away from civilization.

Here we spent the afternoon discussing her condition and prospects. She asked me much about Edna, for, though she had always been kept informed of Edna's actions by Leah, and had attained by this time a pretty good comprehension of her alternate's character, she was much interested in my opinions and conclusions, and I was able to cast new lights upon this second self of hers which gave her

a new point of view. I could not yet bring myself to speak of Edna's coquetries, for of this she had no suspicion. There had been few visitors to Midmeadows since she had lived there, only the doctor and her lawyer, I believe; for she had, of late years, become more and more retiring as Edna's appearances had become more frequent.

Whatever indiscretions Edna had permitted herself with the doctor had been well concealed, as they were so much alone. I myself would never have suspected anything, had she not been free enough with me to set me on the watch. And all this sort of thing, too, had evidently been only of recent growth —it was coincident with Edna's increasing "strength." I don't think that either Leah or I had, for an instant, any compunction on Edna's account against informing Joy of what might be going on. We were loyal to Joy alone—it seemed unquestionable that she was the rightful sovereign self, and that the other was an interloper—our devotion did not hesitate at any violation of confidence in-

cident to such a revelation. But we wanted to spare Joy's feelings as long as possible. For, under whatever spell, it was still Miss Fielding whose actions we must criticize. Irresponsible as she was, she could hardly bear to think of herself as appearing in such a light, knowing what the picture must be in our eyes, and her own. Indeed, it takes a more than ordinary amount of philosophy to know that one has shown a lack of taste or delicacy even under the effects of an anesthetic or an intoxicant, without suffering from mortification and shame. Her embarrassment would be quite as poignant as her sensibility was exquisite.

Joy had kept a diagram of her changes, and she got it out from her desk to show me. The first appearance of No. 2 had occurred when she was about fourteen years old; the second a month or so later, and there had been this usual interval until she was about twenty-one. From that time on, the appearance of No. 2 had increased in frequency, until for the last few years it had settled into a

fairly regular average of two days in every week. There had been in her early childhood, beginning when she was seven years old, some curious abnormal tendencies that had not been recorded; it seemed, therefore, that her development was progressing, roughly, in seven-year cycles.

If that were so, the present daily alternation of personalities seemed to predict a gradual overthrow of her normal self, the original No. 1. The more I discussed it with her, however, the surer I was that this sudden access of strength on the part of Edna was chiefly attributable to the doctor's influence. I did not say so in so many words to Joy, for I wanted first to prepare my plan, but there was no doubt, in my mind, that whatever was his object in overthrowing Joy's control, and making Edna paramount, my coming had somewhat interfered with his experiments, and he had consequently increased his energy in a determination to succeed as soon as possible in his attempt at the replacement. How terrible this slow eclipse

of her soul must be to Joy, I knew well enough.

It is hardly to be wondered at, therefore, that, thrown into intimate contact with so beautiful and so rare a character, I should bend all my will and powers toward helping her in her misfortune. I had decided already to make any sacrifice, and devote all my time to the task. Nor is it to be wondered at, I think, that, so devoting myself to her cause and being so privileged to study her closely, I should, by this time, have fallen deeply in love with her. Her very desperation, her hopeless, futile struggle against something outside any ordinary human experience drew me to her with an ever-increasing fondness. Her reliance on my aid strengthened the bond day by day, hour by hour. How much the doctor's interest in her had given me the additional fillip of jealousy, I would not care to say.

We came back to the incident of the gold chain more than once. What did that phenomenon mean? It was almost the first, and

certainly the strongest and clearest symptom of a common share in Edna's life that Joy had ever had. Was it, then, Joy's dim vision of Edna's experience, or was it more sinister and significant, an evidence of Edna's ability to project herself into Joy's waking life? Did Edna, perhaps, have a coexistent, subconscious life? That it meant something, that it marked some new phase in this last cycle of development, we were both sure.

So we talked and talked that afternoon and through dinner. In the evening, exhausted with speculation, we gave it all up. Joy played her violin for me for an hour or so, and we lost all thought of the problem in our common enjoyment of her music. Then we started a game of chess, which, hard fought, lasted till bed-time.

Before we retired, Joy went out to see the dogs, and on returning she brought in Nokomis.

"I think I'll let her sleep in my room tonight, Leah, she's got such a poor, sore head," she remarked.

Leah looked at me as if to ask my help or advice.

"Aren't you afraid that—Edna may object in the morning, if she should be there?" I asked.

Instantly her suspicions were aroused. "Object to Nokomis? Dear old Nokomis, how could she?"

Nokomis whined anxiously, stretched her forelegs and waited.

I did not know what to say. Joy knew, of course, that Edna was not particularly fond of the collies, but she had no idea of the extent of her dislike. There was, I feared, some danger if, after what had happened yesterday, Edna and Nokomis found themselves together in the same room. Still, I wished to spare Joy, as long as possible, knowledge that would, I was sure, make her extremely sad. As Leah had tacitly left it for me to decide, I said:

"Leah, can't you call Nokomis out early in the morning, before Miss Fielding awakes —in case——"

"Yes, I think it will be all right," she replied.

If Joy suspected anything definite in this quick exchange of glances she did not inquire. She turned to bid me good night, and went up-stairs, Nokomis with her.

V

I was aroused in the night by a growling in Miss Fielding's room. Wide awake in an instant, I sat up in bed and listened intently, but I had not had time to get up before I heard a short, angry yelp, and then Nokomis' footsteps pattering out of the room and going down-stairs in hasty jumps. I struck a match and looked at my watch. It was a quarter past two o'clock. I knew well enough, then, that Edna would take Miss Fielding's place in the morning. It was much as if a ghost had entered the house and lurked in the darkness. For a long time I was too agitated to sleep.

The next day was cool and cloudy. I found a fire burning in the library when I went down-stairs and Leah was there, putting the room to rights. She looked up at

me gratefully, as if it were a consolation to her to have some one to depend upon.

Leah had, by this time, begun to treat me quite as if I were her master. I had always tried to meet her upon terms which would prove that I had no prejudice on account of her color, but that very attitude of mine seemed to make her more willing to do me unlooked-for service. I am told that this is not, as a rule, true of negroes, and the Southerners, who by sentiment and tradition hold themselves as superior in virtue of their birth, keep the respect of colored folk and receive a willing acceptation of subservience that no Northerner, capable of no such race feeling, can achieve. That Leah's gratitude for my consideration did express itself in such devotion proves, perhaps, only that she was intrinsically finer—that she was, as I have already expressed it, ahead of her time. There was much pathos in it, nevertheless, for I was quite ready to regard her as a social, as she was, undoubtedly, a moral equal.

"Did you hear Nokomis?" she asked immediately.

"I should say! Didn't it awaken Miss Fielding?"

"Oh, no, she sleeps heavily at these times. But it awakened me—wasn't it horrible! It was Miss Edna coming in! Think of it!"

"How is she this morning?"

"Fretful and irritable—to me, at least. She asked for you, and she has been telephoning to the doctor again. Oh, I wish you might prevent that. What does she do it for, Mr. Castle?"

"He is probably making her do it," I replied. "You see, he has attained a sort of power over her, I suspect. Just how much, we must try to find out. Have you any idea what she said?"

"No; she sent me out of the room. But I think he'll probably be down to-day. How I dread it! Why does he come here so often?"

"He's coming down, Leah, because he realizes that we've begun to fight him. It

will be open war, this time, I expect. We don't like each other, and I strongly suspect that by to-night the cards will be shown down."

"He's trying to get rid of me!" she said hopelessly, going on with her dusting.

"Well, he'll have to beat me there, first," I said. "So long as Edna doesn't have two days running I think I can keep you here safely. But we must be ready for the worst. Is there any place near here where you could stay, if necessary, for a day or so?"

She reminded me of the old cabin a little way down the road, and thought it might be fitted up well enough. She wouldn't be afraid to stay there alone, and could probably manage her meals somehow, through King, who was always ready to help her.

"Have you a revolver?" I asked.

"Miss Joy has one, and I can easily get it."

"It might be well to have it at hand," I suggested. "I'd advise you to ask Uncle Jerdon to clean up the cabin for you. And

be sure that the collies are fastened up, too, won't you? Where's Nokomis now?"

"Nokomis came down-stairs and spent the rest of the night in the kitchen. When King opened the door, she went out. She'll not come back, I think, till Miss Joy's herself again."

"That will be to-morrow, I trust. But by that time we must have something definite to report to her. To-day, if possible, I am going to find out exactly what the doctor is up to. I shall hold back for no scruples; I'll listen, I'll lie and I'll cheat to find out his game and how to outwit him!"

"I'll do anything you say, too, Mr. Castle. I'm willing to take the same pledge." This was, for her, the consummate sacrifice. She would, I am sure, have given her honor, if necessary, to save her mistress.

We were interrupted then, by Miss Fielding's appearance—I dare not call her Edna, lest one forgets that in almost every outward aspect she was unchanged. Indeed, had her body, instead of her mind, been metamor-

phosed, I think it would have been easier to adjust one's self to the strangeness of it. But Edna's words and Edna's actions constantly gave the lie to Joy's voice and Joy's face. One could not even treat her as insane. It was definitely another person in masquerade. My soul went out to her at the sight, to return chilled at the revelation of that strangeness. I was constantly being tricked by my memory. When I had become so interested in the conversation as not to notice her appearance it was easy enough to feel that I was talking to quite another than Joy, but upon my first sight of her, or when, after having looked away for a while my eyes returned suddenly to her, the surprise of Edna's words coming from Joy's lips gave me a shock. But with all this I had begun to accept Edna as a perversion, a distortion of Joy's self, rather than as a separate individuality, and I was caring too much for Joy, now, not to witness the working of the spell without a constant, fiery protest in my heart.

After our first greetings Leah disappeared, and we went into the dining-room. Edna sat opposite me at the table as I breakfasted, her elbows on the cloth, her chin on the backs of her clasped hands, looking at me.

"Well," she began, "I've forgotten again, Chet."

I wondered what was coming. She seemed more absorbed, more introspective than usual, for what of this phase she had heretofore manifested had appeared usually later in the day. She watched me, too, with a curious intentness.

"But you're not so bad as you have been," I offered. "You know you only lost a day, this time."

"No, I'm getting hold of myself, I believe. The doctor is helping me, I'm sure. I used to lose four or five days every week."

"I congratulate you!" I said, falsely enough, I confess. But I must at any cost placate her.

"How was I yesterday, Chet?"

"What d'you mean?"

"How did I act? What did I do? Was I very different from what I am to-day, for instance? Tell me all about it!"

This staggered me. She had never betrayed so much curiosity before; she had always taken her lapses in her careless, thoughtless way, without much question. I saw Leah in the kitchen stop and listen, her lips parted, showing her white teeth.

"You were very lovely—as usual!" I said.

"I'm glad you found me so, Chet. You've never said that before, you know!"

"Well, I've thought so, often enough!"

"Did you like me any better than you usually do, then?" she insisted, keeping her eyes on mine.

"Oh, there are some times when I don't quite approve of you, I confess."

"When, Chet?"

"When you abuse the dogs—or Leah." Leah disappeared.

"But they abuse me, too, horrid things!" she complained peevishly. "And I can't for the life of me see why you're so fond of

Leah. She's a great trial to me. I'm only keeping her on, now, on your account, and if you scold me, I'll be sorry I did."

"Oh, I'm not going to scold you. You're too charming."

"As charming as I was yesterday?"

"Almost." I hated myself for saying it.

"What did we do yesterday? You haven't told me yet."

"Why, we talked, mostly. We sat up in your study all the afternoon, and in the evening we played chess."

"Played chess? I must have played pretty badly!"

"Oh, no! In fact, you gave me a hard fight and beat me."

"Chess is stupid, though. I'd rather talk. What did we talk about?"

"Oh, about you, mostly."

"Did you make love to me?"

"No."

"Why not, if I was so very much nicer than usual?"

Her deliberate misquotation, a common

enough feminine trait, was characteristic of Edna's newly acquired mental agility, but in addition I perceived that there was something behind even that. It was something new for her to proceed so categorically. It embarrassed me not a little, and yet I could not quite bring myself to lie to her outright, even to throw her off the track. It was almost impossible when I looked her straight in the face—Joy's face—nor, of course, could I reveal anything of what had really happened.

"Oh," I said, "you're very nice now, but I'm not making love to you, you see."

She further disconcerted me by saying, "Why not?"

There was nothing to do now but to carry the war into Africa.

"Because Doctor Copin seems to have that right—or privilege," I gave her boldly, making a good deal of it by my tone.

"Doctor Copin is very nice indeed to me; indeed, he's nicer than you are to me, Chet. He tells me things that you won't, and he's

helping me to get my memory back. Why don't *you* help me?"

"How can I help?" I asked.

"Tell me how I was different yesterday, if I *was* different. Was I different toward him?"

"Of course, I don't know how you've been in the habit of treating him before I came."

"Well, how did he treat *me,* then?"

"Oh, you'd better ask *him* about that! But," I added, to try her, "I think he's undoubtedly in love with you."

"And you're not? For shame, Chet!" She looked demurely at me, as if merely to impugn my taste. "He's not nearly so nice as you, Chet," she continued, "but he does treat me better. He's done a great deal for me, and, if I ever do get well, it will be through his advice."

"What does he do? How does he treat you —can you tell me?"

"Why, he hypnotizes me, you know. I told you that before."

"And gives you suggestions, I suppose?"

"I don't know what you mean. I just go to sleep, and after a while I wake up again. He hasn't been able to do it till quite lately, and I don't understand it very well, anyway. I don't care, so long as I recover. He says I'm a remarkably interesting case."

"So you are, Edna, most assuredly," I replied. "You would be, even if you were all right."

"Thank you for that. I'll put down one good mark to your credit. But tell me—was I pretty yesterday, Chet?" She looked up at me earnestly under her brows.

"Very pretty—beautiful!"

"Was I clever, too?"

"Very!"

"More than usual? More pretty and more clever than I am to-day?"

Wishing to see what she was driving at, I risked a chance shot. "Yes," I said.

"Oh, I *hate* you!" she cried, and she got up in a pet and threw herself out of the room, scowling.

I hurried after to propitiate her, but she

was already outdoors. I overtook her in the lane and tried to take her hand and get her back, but she flung away from me and walked on without answering me. Giving up the chase, I returned to the library, very sorry to have aroused her temper. I knew I should have lied to her for Joy's sake, for the sake of peace, for the sake of final victory.

I was pretty well convinced, by this time, that Edna's eyes were opened, and she knew what was going on. She must undoubtedly have been informed by the doctor the day before. That would account for her behavior at dinner and in the evening. For the first time in her life, she had become aware that, during those lapses when she lost days at a time, some one else lived for her, animating the same body. If, as I was not too modest to imagine, she cared for me, the reason for her anger was evident. Edna was now probably definitely pitted against Joy in the conflict that was doubtless already on. I was determined, therefore, to bring the thing to

a crisis, that we might, at least, know where we stood.

I had not been alone fifteen minutes when I saw Leah approaching the house. She was sobbing, her head bent down, her handkerchief to her eyes. I ran out to meet her, my heart in my mouth.

She stopped and told me, trembling convulsively as she spoke, that while on the way with a broom to the cabin, intending to make it fit for temporary occupancy, Edna had met her and questioned her. At Leah's attempt to conceal the truth, Edna, who was already in an angry mood, burst into a fury and struck Leah across the face with such force that her cheek was badly cut, inside, by her teeth. The revolver had dropped from Leah's pocket; Edna had picked it up, accused Leah of stealing it, and had gone on down the lane.

"Oh!" Leah cried passionately, "I don't care how much she hurt me—she's not responsible, I'm sure—but I'm afraid that now she'll send me away again. Then what will

become of Miss Joy? If she'll strike me, she'll do worse. If we don't do something pretty soon, it will be too late!"

"You must keep out of sight as much as possible for the rest of the day," I said, "especially as the doctor will probably come down. If we could only prevent that!" At the words, an idea occurred to me. "What train does he usually come down on?"

"The ten o'clock from the city. He usually takes luncheon here."

"Then there's just time, perhaps, to catch him. Come up-stairs. I'm going to try to see if we can't find out something. It's a desperate chance, but I'll take it. The thing can't be much worse, even if we're found out."

We went up into the study and I called up the doctor's number. While we were waiting for it I gave Leah her instructions.

"Don't speak loud, just barely loud enough so that he may hear with difficulty, and let him do most of the talking. Pitch your voice as high as you can. Ask him

what train he's coming down on. I'll take the receiver and listen, and tell you what else to say."

In a few minutes the bell rang and we were connected with the doctor's office. I heard him say, "Hello! Is that you, Miss Fielding?"

"Say 'yes,'" I whispered. Leah did so.

"Anything the matter?" he asked. Leah said "No."

"What did you want, then?" was his next question.

Leah put the question about the train.

"I'm going to take the ten. I'm starting right off. What's the matter with your voice? It sounds different, and it's so weak anyway, I can hardly hear it!"

I told Leah to say, "What?"

"Oh, never mind," he exclaimed impatiently. "There must be some trouble over the line. I'd never recognize your voice at all. Can you hear me plainly?"

"Yes," said Leah.

"Well, look out for Castle," he went on.

"Don't let him know that you suspect anything, will you?"

"No," from Leah, at my prompting.

"He's trying to make trouble for you; and he will, if we don't look out. He's in love with *the other one,* and you'd better try and see if you can't get rid of him! Now, Edna!"

"Yes!" Leah again repeated my whispered word.

"Are you listening?"

"Yes."

"Are you listening?" Why was he repeating the question?

"Yes!"

"Are you listening?"

At this, I suspected a formula he might be using for some hypnotic suggestion. I whispered to Leah to say "Yes, yes," faintly.

"Meet me at the station, sure. You will come alone. Good-by!"

I hung up the receiver, pretty sure that he had not suspected the deception. I went down-stairs again, and as, by eleven o'clock

Edna had not returned to the house, I had no doubt that she had gone to the station of her own volition to meet the doctor. This was fortunate, as, seeing her evidently in obedience to his suggestion, he might be less likely to question her about telephoning and thereby discover our ruse. I was, however, nervous at the prospect of meeting them. Leah could scarcely be kept if the trick were discovered; I should have hard work brazening it out myself.

At about noon I started down the north lane to meet them, and discover the state of affairs in time to let Leah know. Half-way to the road, however, I happened to recall what Uncle Jerdon had told me about seeing the two, the day we had broken down in the automobile. I decided to hide and see what I could discover—in a word, to spy upon them. I was by this time in no mood to be nice about my choice of weapons, and I took the first one that came to hand.

I had not waited long before I heard voices approaching, and I concealed myself behind

a clump of bushes to watch. I was too far away to hear distinctly, and, in fact, they did very little talking—an occasional exclamation from her, and the doctor's nasal replies. My eyes told me more than my ears—enough to prove that, however Edna regarded me, the doctor also came in for considerable more of affectionate demonstration than I had suspected, and either he was not so conscientious as I had been, or he was actually in love with her. Their actions were those of acknowledged lovers. Why, then, had she flirted with me? Was her behavior now, perhaps, mere pique caused by the jealousy I had aroused in the way I had spoken of Joy?

I went in as luncheon was served. Edna met me a little coolly, the doctor more so. I was decidedly uncomfortable at being now a guest in a house where I was, perhaps, not wanted, but I pretended not to notice anything amiss, and endured my position as well as I could. The doctor ignored my presence completely, addressing all his dull witticisms to Edna, who laughed at them as usual, do-

ing her best, now and then, to drag me into the conversation. She could not keep any one mood for long, however, and before the end of the meal I flattered myself that she would, after all, prefer being with me alone; but the doctor's pop-eyes held her, and his interminable foolery kept her whole attention concentrated upon him, despite herself. Nothing at all was said about the telephoning.

Directly after luncheon was over the two went up-stairs into the study, without even the formality of an apology to me. As Leah was busy about her own work, I strolled out into the kitchen to see King. He was washing the dishes, and greeted me with his customary cryptic grin.

"Say, King," I said, "you got a joss in your room?"

His grin grew wider. "Yep!" he ejaculated, nodding.

"You no Christian, then? You not go to Sunday-school?"

"Aw, no good go to Sunday-school—I can

talk Melican all light. Chlistian joss no good for Chinaman. You think so?"

"I guess you're right," I said. "But do you worship your joss? You burn punk-stick sometime? You trim him up with paper flowers, maybe?"

He laughed to himself as if it were a great joke, but kept on washing his dishes like a machine. "You likee see my joss?" he said, looking back over his shoulder. "Heap good joss—velly old. I bling him flom China."

"What d'you pray for, King?"

"Aw, sometime one thing, sometime other thing. I play for good luck, allee same Chlistian. You play, too?"

"Oh, sometimes," I said. "But go on, tell me, King. When do you pray? You pray to-day?"

He shook his head. "Aw, no; no play yet. Play all time at night."

"What did you ask for last night, then? Come on, tell me!"

"Aw, no, no!" He shook his head, still laughing sillily.

"Money, King? I'll bet you prayed for money!"

"Aw, no, no! I tell you. I play for Miss Fielding."

I had stumbled upon a live wire! Instantly I was aroused, and careful to say no tactless word. What I had already got from him was an extraordinary amount for a Chinese of his caste to discover to a white man. So I went witfully to lead him on to tell me more.

"That's good, King; I pray for Miss Fielding, too. I want her to get well. Don't you?"

"Yep. She good lady, you bet. Maybe she get well, I dunno."

"What you think the matter with her, King? I'm worried about her."

He emptied his dish-water out, and wiped his hands first. Then he stopped suddenly and said:

"Miss Fielding, she got one no-good debbil on inside. You know? Sometime he heap bad, sometime he keep still. Plenty people

have debbil in China; all time go pliest, he dlive 'em away easy."

"The priest drives the devils away, King? How does he do it?"

"Oh, flighten debbil, tha's all. Stlike gong, burn fire-clackers, make all time heap loud noise and debbil go away flighten'."

"I wish Miss Fielding could be cured as easy as that, King!"

For the first time during the conversation his grin disappeared. He came up to me, gesticulating.

"You likee flighten away debbil? Maybe I help you sometime?"

"Could you do it?" I laughed.

"Sure! Aw! you no think so?" He returned to wipe his dishes philosophically. I smiled at his earnestness and walked away.

I sat down in the library to wait till the doctor came down. I found that he would have to walk to the station, as Uncle Jerdon was away, and I determined to have another talk with him, if I could manage to see him alone. I had decided on a *coup d 'état.*

In a half-hour they reappeared, Edna showing traces of heaviness about her eyes, as if she had been asleep. The doctor looked at his watch, and found that he had just time to walk to the train. I offered to accompany him, and, though he appeared surprised, he assented with a good grace. Edna did not care to go with us. It seemed to me that she not only perceived the antagonism between the doctor and me, but fostered it for her own ends. It was as if we were fighting for her and she had decided to let the best man win. So we left her and started out.

I began as soon as we were round the turn of the lane.

"Doctor Copin," I said, "I wish you'd let me know exactly what Miss Fielding's condition is, and what hopes you have for her recovery."

"Did she ask you to interrogate me?" he asked blandly.

"In a way, she did. But I do so, nevertheless, quite on my own responsibility, as a

friend who is very much interested in her case."

"Then I must decline to answer. You are aware, I suppose, that Miss Fielding has had her own reasons for not wishing the matter to be discussed?"

"I'm perfectly aware of that, but I think that, as I now know all the essential facts, it can't possibly matter to her. On the other hand, I can help, perhaps."

"I didn't know you were a specialist in nervous diseases—or even a psychologist," he answered in a sneering tone.

"I am neither, but I have common sense enough to perceive that her trouble is approaching a crisis. That, in fact, is my sole justification for staying on here."

"Oh, if that's all, you can go any time. I'm quite able to cope with the situation, I assure you."

"Doctor Copin, I insist upon having a statement of what you are doing in this matter. I speak as the representative of Miss Fielding—the real Miss Fielding."

He turned to me now with his thin lips drawn back, showing his even line of false teeth, in a cruel, selfish smile. "Insist?" he repeated. "You have hardly that right, whatever Miss Fielding has said."

"I certainly do have that right!" I maintained.

He stopped in his tracks and confronted me. "Why?" he demanded.

The time had come for me to play my bluff.

"Because I am engaged to Miss Fielding!" I announced curtly.

He scowled fiercely. "You are!" he retorted. "Very well, then, I have as good a right to refuse to answer you!"

It was my turn to say, "Why? What do you mean?"

"Because I am engaged to her myself. So there you are!" With that he walked off, leaving me standing, staring at him. I was literally bluffed to a standstill. I watched him striding down the lane in silence. I was in a labyrinth of thought. Then I turned slowly back toward the house and prepared

for war. I should have to get it out of Edna, or give up and confess myself defeated.

As I walked up the lane I heard a rustling in the bushes, and peering through them, I saw Nokomis bounding along, her ears laid back, her brush trailing. She leaped down the bank a little way ahead of me and stood for a moment, pointing in the direction of the house. I called her, but she only turned her fine head for a moment, and then trotted on up the lane. I followed after her leisurely, preparing for my cross-examination of Edna.

Just before I came to the turn, I heard a quick, sharp yelp, and a woman's shrill cry. Then a shot rang out, echoing against the hillside. I ran round the bend at full speed.

There was Edna with a pistol smoking in her hand. In the path, in front of her, Nokomis lay dead. Leah, running up from the house, had stopped behind Edna, and stood horror-stricken, afraid to move. It was like the scene of a play.

I strode up. "What's happened?" I demanded.

Edna dropped the pistol to her side and looked down at the collie angrily.

"Nokomis tried to bite me," she said. "But she'll never try it again! I always thought she was dangerous."

"Give me that revolver!" I said sternly.

She met my look, shrinking a little, and handed over the weapon. I put it into my pocket. Leah retreated fearfully to the house.

First, I took Nokomis' body and carried it to a bed of ferns beside the path, patted her head and left her there till she could be buried. Then I took Edna's arm, gently, and led her away. She told me, a little frightened now at the impressiveness of my manner, that she had met Nokomis suddenly, and attempting to drive her away, the collie had snapped viciously at her. Edna had the revolver which she had taken from Leah earlier in the day, still in her jacket pocket, and, at the attack, had drawn it and fired immediately.

I had no reproaches for her—what was there to say? Even in speaking, she had recovered from her mood, and she became as blithe and inconsequent as if nothing had happened—the only effect apparent upon her was a whimsical pettishness at my implied rebuke. She began to attempt to cajole me childishly, patting my hand, looking saucily up into my face and pretending a sort of arch depreciation of her temper. It was evident that she was not at all sorry for what she had done; in fact, she seemed to be secretly altogether pleased at her prowess, though she covered it with considerable guile.

All the rest of the afternoon she was in an excited frame of mind. She treated me with all her former comradeship, but I could see that she was acting. It gave me a new insight into the rapidity of her development effected by the doctor's information. She was no longer a child; she was becoming complex, although still dominated by rapidly changing moods. A new phase had indubi-

tably commenced; it was the sign, I feared, of a growing supremacy.

That evening she wheedled me with every art of the coquette. Her familiarity seemed to give the lie to the doctor's statement about their engagement, but it might well be true that she was playing him as audaciously as she was playing me. I did not, of course, ask her about it. It did not matter.

If I had needed to exercise my self-restraint on that other evening when she attempted to provoke me, it was much more necessary now, for she had become less differentiated, intellectually, from Joy; so much so, at least, as to permit me at times to give my imagination play, and fancy her, for the moment, the real Joy, my Joy in an alluring guise, tinctured with wild-fire. The line of cleavage now was more along moral lines. Edna's mind was evolving at the expense of her ethical nature. Her temptation was seductive and arrantly conceived to torment me; I was sure that it was intended to shake my allegiance to her rival self. It was like

playing with edged tools to be alone with her. In her intervals of repose she fell so naturally into Joy's poses that it was disconcerting. It was like *The Faerie Queene* over again; like an errant knight, I was confronted by the image of my mistress so cunningly enchanted that I could not tell till she spoke that her body was obsessed by another spirit.

She asked me much about the day before, and about what she had done and said. As the evening wore on and she could not defeat my continual evasions, she began to grow sullen and reserved. Finally, she appeared to give it up, and went up-stairs with a sarcastic emphasis to her "Good night, Prig!"

VI

Next morning I lay in bed for some time after I awoke, planning my day. If it were Joy who appeared, there were several things to be decided upon and accomplished; if Edna, a conflict was imminent which caused me much anxiety. Queerly enough, the proposal I would have to make to Joy seemed almost as if it would be an *ex post facto* agreement. I had already announced my engagement to the doctor, but I had not made my bluff without holding a pretty good hand. I couldn't doubt, by this time, how Joy felt toward me.

At eight o'clock I heard the customary dialogue—Miss Fielding's door being still left ajar—but I noticed that her voice was quick and excited. Leah was called in immediately, and the two women seemed to

have more than the usual amount of talk together.

Next, I heard the dogs barking in answer to their names; but there were only three replies to Joy's calls, to-day. Poor old Nokomis would never greet her mistress again. Then the door was closed. Joy evidently did not wait to have breakfast, as usual, in her room, for fifteen minutes later I heard her going down-stairs.

Fearing that something was wrong, though I was sure, now, that it was Joy herself whom I had heard, I rose and dressed as quickly as I could. I found her in the library waiting for me.

She held a folded paper in her hand, as she sat by the window, looking out listlessly. I bade her good morning; she looked up without a smile and silently handed me the paper. Unfolding it, I saw, written in a round, childish, vertical script, the words:

"*I know you now—Cat!*"

"I found this pinned to my pillow when I woke up," she said. "It's from Edna."

Then a faint, dreamy smile softened her lips as she said, "You see, even to her, I am the White Cat!"

"How d'you know it's from Edna?"

"It's her handwriting. She writes very differently from me."

I looked at it, wondering. It was the first shot in the battle.

"You see, she has found out. Her eyes are opened," Joy said.

"Yes. I was going to tell you about it to-day. I suspected it yesterday, and it has proved true. It complicates things immensely."

"Leah has told me that I struck her, too. Think of it! It makes me positively faint. What horrible part of me has come to the surface in Edna? What undiscovered self is it that is torturing me so? It's a hideous revelation. It shows how depraved I must be, at heart."

"It isn't you!" I declared. "It's another woman, quite. It's only you in the sense that it would be you if you were in-

toxicated, or if you were dreaming, or insane. You mustn't think of yourself as in any way responsible."

"Then of course *she's* not, either?"

"No more than a child, or an idiot. She uses your body and your mind, but she hasn't, so to speak, the use of your moral scruples. She's a disintegrated self, imperfectly functioned. All the same we have, of course, to treat her as quite another person. And the time is approaching, I think, when we'll have to act. I don't intend to spare her. We must use force if necessary."

"How does she know about me, after so long an ignorance?" Joy inquired.

I told her what I had heard at the telephone. She could scarcely credit my testimony.

"If the doctor is definitely leagued with Edna, what can we do? He has all his science and Edna's active help. I'm lost if he's really against me! I *can't* be sure that the doctor has deliberately played me false. There may be some mistake."

"I think I can prove that to you," I answered, "but I have a great deal to say to you first."

I think she knew, then; I think she hoped to hear what I was going to say, for she gave me her hand, and smiled up at me as she rose to go in to breakfast. We sat down with Leah at the table.

I had taken it for granted that Leah had told Joy everything that had happened the day before, and so, not wishing to grieve her further, I took care to say nothing about Nokomis. But the swelling on Leah's cheek could not be so easily ignored, and several times I saw the tears come into Joy's eyes at the sight of it.

While we were there the clock struck half-past eight. At the sound Joy's face changed —an expression of abstraction came into it. It was as if she were trying to recall something that eluded her memory. Then she half rose, like a somnambulist.

"I think I'll run up-stairs and telephone the doctor," she said, without looking at me.

"Why should you?" I asked, much surprised, after the way we had talked.

"I don't know," she said vaguely, looking about the room. "Oughtn't he to know how I treated Leah? Perhaps he can prevent that in some way."

"You'd better not, Joy," I said.

She stood for a moment irresolute, and then, as if urged by some extraneous impulse she moved a little nearer the door.

"I just want to find out if he's coming down to-day," she said automatically.

I jumped up and touched her shoulder.

"Please don't telephone to Doctor Copin —you *mustn't!*" I said with decision.

"Oh," she said, wide-eyed, coming to herself a little. "There's a reason?"

"There's a good reason!" I exclaimed fervently.

She moved back, as if still opposing some force that was drawing her out of the room, sat down limply, half rose again, reseated herself.

"Resist!" I said to her.

Leah looked on without a word, breathless, her lips open.

Joy looked madly at me. "What is it, Chester? Tell me!"

"It's only a post-hypnotic suggestion, that's all. You must defeat it."

Then she literally shook herself free from the obsession. "Oh, why am I tortured and racked so!" she exclaimed. "Can't I be permitted to be myself when I *am* myself? Isn't it bad enough to be robbed of myself half the time without his imposing his will on me now? Why is he doing this?"

"That's just what I want to find out," I said. "The important thing is not to give in to him. His experiments may possibly be justified, but I don't think so. We certainly have good ground to suspect him. Have you quite got over your desire to telephone?"

"Yes—but it's queer—I can still think of reasons why I might, though of course I agree with you that it's not best to. You see, I've only given up to you instead of to him. I'm quite in the dark, now; I seem to have no

will of my own. I can't judge, I can't understand even my own impulses. Well, if I'm blind you and Leah will lead me, won't you?"

She reached over and took Leah's hand affectionately.

When we finished breakfast, Joy and I went into the library. There was an old, gilt-framed, concave mirror there, over the fireplace, that gathered in and focused on its disk the whole room in one condensed, shadowy scene. Joy went up to it.

"Aren't we queer and strange in there?" she said. "It's so dim and ghostly; when I look up and see any one in it, it always seems to me like some scene of Maeterlinck or Sudermann."

She walked over to another glass, more formal and more true, and looked at herself intently.

"Look at the lines about my eyes! They weren't there a year ago! My whole face has changed. . . . I have grown ten years older this last month. . . . My

eyes themselves are different. . . . There's another wrinkle. . . . I wish my eyebrows were even. . . . I believe my nose is one-sided, too. . . .''

Her voice died away. I looked up and saw her gazing into the mirror with a strange intentness. Her brow was puckered into a frown. Suddenly her hand went to her heart with a gesture of horror.

''Oh!'' she cried, and hid her face in her hands.

''What is it?'' I asked.

''The doctor!'' she exclaimed, shuddering.

''Tell me!'' I insisted.

Instead, she sprang up and began to walk up and down the room, wringing her hands. ''It's awful; it's all confused in my mind, like a dream—but I seem to remember things that never happened at all. Oh, *did* they ever happen?'' she turned to demand of me in despair.

''That's what I want you to tell me.''

She dropped into her chair again and began to cry—''Oh, I can't tell you! I can't!

It never happened, I'm sure! What does it mean, Chester?"

"It's probably what happened here yesterday—to Edna—that you remember, Joy."

"Oh, how dare he treat her so, then? It comes back to me in scraps and shreds of scenes. Oh, what a cad he must be! And what a woman she must be, to allow him—oh, I can't stand it! Why did you make me remember? How can I ever look any one in the face again?"

She threw herself into the cushions on the window-seat and burst into tears. There was but one way to restore her self-respect, and I went over to her and took her hand. At first she pulled it away, but I persisted.

"Dear Joy," I said, "don't grieve so, for it's all right. It was Edna, not you, you know, and Edna's not responsible for what she does, I'm sure. Don't cry, for I have something to say to you, now, that you must answer."

She looked at me through her tears, and waited.

"I want you to marry me, Joy."

"Oh, please *don't!*" she exclaimed. "Marry you? How can I listen to such a thing, after what has happened? Oh, no, *no!*"

"It's partly on account of that that I ask you now. I want to help you, and I can help you so much more if we are engaged. I want the right to help you."

"Oh, it's only pity that makes you ask me. It's only to protect me! Never, never!"

"It isn't that," I protested. "I love you, Joy—I have loved you for a long time, and loving you, I want to save you, not only for your sake, but for my own as well. I want you for my wife, Joy! Don't you love me?"

Her tears had ceased and now she looked at me with bright eyes that burned softly.

"My dear," she said, "of course I love you! I think I have loved you ever since that first day you came here. But for that very reason I must say no. How could I ever drag you into this wretched trouble?"

"Oh, I'm in it all over, whether or no," I said. "Do you think I could ever leave you now? Were I only your friend, even, I'd have to stay with you; but I'm your lover, Joy! I'm most desperately in love with you. And I intend to have you, too! No matter what you say, no matter what you do, you're mine, and you can't get away from me. So you'd better just say 'yes' this moment."

She sat up and looked at me tenderly. "Don't speak of it again—not till all this problem is settled, at least. It's impossible. Do you think I could think of it after what has happened, after I've found out what I really am? If I am ever released from this spell—if I can ever forget what I've just found out, it will be time enough to speak of love. But not now, I beg of you. I'm the White Cat!"

"I've already told the doctor that we're engaged," I said.

"You told the doctor!" she exclaimed. "How could you?"

I repeated our conversation in the lane.

Her momentary resentment at me died away at hearing the doctor's own announcement.

"Then perhaps Edna is in love with him, after all! That would account for much, and excuse everything, perhaps." She drew a sigh of relief at the thought of this palliation.

"I don't think she is, but she might be willing to marry him to get her freedom," I offered.

"But then, if Edna *is* in love, I have still less right to let you propose to me. Why, just think of it—it's incredible! If they're engaged——"

"They're not engaged, I'm sure."

"It makes no difference—she may care for him more than you think. It's fearful! I can't talk about it!"

"But she *can't* marry him! We must prevent that! Think of the horror of that possibility!"

I had small need to appeal to her imagination. Her mind was already whirling with the possibilities of such a situation. She

stared at me, dazed, speechless, her eyes filled with terror. Then she collapsed and fell into my arms.

"Oh, Chester, what shall I do? Take care of me! I'm so frightened!"

"You must listen to me, Joy," I said. "I love you so that my heart will break if you don't consent and let me help you. You must be my wife, and then we can defy them and fight it out together."

She started up with a new thought. "Oh, hasn't Edna a right to *her* love, too? Won't it be as bad for her, possibly, if I consent? How can I force her to suffer that! How can I bear to think of your being with her while I'm wandering, lost, eclipsed? Oh, don't you see how shockingly impossible the whole thing is? We can neither of us dare to love. We have no right even to think of it! How can you suggest it? It's unthinkable!"

"But you love me?" I asked.

She offered me her lips for the first time, and clung to me, trembling.

"Then nothing is impossible. We'll wait a while, and see. But at least, so far as the doctor is concerned, I can't afford to be stultified. You'll not repudiate my announcement? You'll admit it to him, if he asks? I must have that weapon against him."

She turned it over in her mind. "I'll not deny it," she said finally, "but you must not consider it a promise. It's simply too ghastly to think of!"

I had gained that much, at any rate, and though my heart sank at the thought of the possibilities our words had pictured, I still hoped to be inspired to some successful plan for attack and defense. I knew that Joy loved me—that was everything. It made me bolder and more confident. So I put the horrors from me and thought only of our love.

She turned suddenly toward me and said: "What would you do for me, Chester?"

"Anything, except give you up!"

"Remember the White Cat!" she said.

"Would you do what she asked the Prince to do?"

"What do you mean?"

She spoke deliberately. "Conceive, if you can, our being beaten in the end. Conceive that Edna might marry the doctor—and then think of me!"

"I'll prevent that!" I said, through my teeth.

"You may not be able to prevent it, except in one way."

I understood. "If I ever believe that *that* is the only way to prevent it—I promise to help you."

"I may be able to do it alone; of course I shall try. But if I haven't the means, the opportunity, you must promise to help me find them."

"I promise!" I repeated.

She tossed her head back with her old gesture.

Then I said: "Joy, all this is unnecessary; though I've promised. If you'll only marry me now—if you'll even consent to an

engagement, it will enable me to defy the doctor and prevent his coming here."

"Oh, I can not, I can not!" she cried. "You know why as well as I! It's too awful! I love you—that must be enough for the present."

She rose and added: "Let's go outdoors and take a walk. Perhaps the air and the sun will do me good, and afterward we can think it over and decide how to manage the doctor. I'll just run up-stairs and change my clothes and then we'll try the sun-cure."

As she went up to her room, I walked out into the kitchen to talk to King while I waited for her. He was busy at the stove, but welcomed me with his usual meaningless grin.

"Well, King," I said, "I guess your joss is pretty good, after all. Miss Fielding is better to-day."

"H'm!" He shook his head. "Debbil come plenty time more!"

"Perhaps we can pray him away," I suggested.

He dropped his spoon and came up and took my arm.

"You likee come lookee my joss?"

I assented, amused at his insistence, and he led me out into the yard where, beside the stable, he had a little shed. It was filled with the odor of burning sandalwood. In his room, by the upper end of his cot, was his porcelain joss, a horrible-faced deity. Long placards of red paper containing Chinese writing were hung about, and there were paper flowers, dusty and fly-specked, upon the stand. At the feet of the idol was a bowl full of ashes in which were many joss-sticks. Three were lighted, the others had burned out. There was also a small lamp, with a lighted wick floating on the nut-oil. I inspected it all very seriously.

King rummaged in his trunk, and soon, grinning, beckoned to me. I went over to him and saw, in the tray, a large, ferocious-looking mask such as are used in the Chinese theaters and at the Feasts of the Dead. Beside it was a pair of huge brass cymbals and

a snake-skin tomtom. King held up the mask.

"Oh, you used to be an actor, eh?" I said.

He grinned and held the thing in front of his face. It certainly was horrible. He took up the cymbals and struck one clang. Then he put them away.

"Heap good for debbil. Dlive him away quick!" he said. "Maybe some time I tly him! You think so?"

I laughed, and went back to the library, where Joy was already waiting for me.

She was standing by the window-seat, looking out, putting in a hat-pin, lost in thought, when I entered. My footsteps made no noise on the heavy rug, and I thoughtlessly touched her on the shoulder before she was aware of my approach. Absorbed in her trouble, unstrung, the surprise startled her with a sudden irrational terror; she leaped away as if from the touch of a snake. Then, seeing me, she dropped upon the window-seat, her hand on her heart.

"Oh, you frightened me so! You see how

nervous I am. I didn't hear you. I'm a goose!"

I took no step toward her, but stood there gazing at her. A sudden idea had come to me at sight of her fear, and immediately a plan was unrolled before me, a perfected thing, a solution of the problem, perhaps. At my fixed, stony attitude, however, she took a new alarm and cried out:

"What is it, Chester? What is it?"

"Wait a moment," I said quietly, "let me think it out." My tone reassured her, but she was still agitated as she watched me while I turned it over in my mind. Then I took a seat beside her.

"It's a desperate chance, but it may work."

"You have a plan?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you. It will be much better for you not to know."

"Oh, I'm afraid not to know! It's dreadful to be conspiring against that poor girl.

It's like plotting a murder. I can't bear the thought of it. You must tell me."

"It will be hard enough for me—you could not stand it," I said. "You'll have to trust me, for I shall save you in spite of yourself. But I can't share this with you."

"You'll not injure her, Chester?"

"How can I, when it will be your own face that I shall confront? It will be your own voice that I shall hear. I wonder if I can do it!"

"Oh, I *must* know or I shan't consent," she declared. "What right have we to destroy her, after all? She has a right, perhaps, to her life!"

"Joy," I said, "you must think of it as a dream, as I said. In our dreams we suffer and enjoy, but so long as there is no bridge between that and our waking state, it need not matter to us. What must be done is no more than a surgical operation. It will restore you, I think, to health."

"But what of her?"

"She'll merely disappear. She'll take her

place on the map again and join the rest of you."

"You won't tell me?"

"I can't!"

She rose proudly. "Then I do not consent," she declared. "I can suffer still. I'll summon new reserves of strength and I'll fight it out as it has begun. I'll forswear happiness, love, peace. I'll accept my fate —until I can stand it no longer. Then, I have my own remedy and I shall not be afraid to adopt it. There's always *that* way out! No, I'm stronger than you think, and it's quite settled. Now come outdoors and let's get some fresh air. It's like a haunted house in here."

I tried no longer to persuade her, but I had already decided that I would put my plan through without her consent, if necessary. It happened, however, that this course was not necessary.

We went out into the sunshine and the fresh air and the perfume of June roses. In front of the house she stopped and called

the collies. They came trooping joyfully about her.

"Where's Nokomis?" she asked. "Hasn't Nokomis come back yet? That's queer!"

I saw, then, that she had not been told. It was shocking to have to inflict this new blow upon her, after all she had been through, but it could do no good to conceal the fact any longer. As she turned to go around to the stable, I took her hand.

"Send the dogs back," I said.

She did so, with a question in her eyes. I took her arm and led her down toward the turn of the lane.

"Nokomis will never come back, Joy," I said.

"Why?" she exclaimed. Then she saw the answer in my eyes, and she grasped my arm, as if she were about to fall.

"Oh, don't say—Nokomis isn't dead?" she whispered.

"It was my fault, Joy; I should have had her taken away out of danger. But I was too late."

I took her to the bed of ferns and pointed to the dead collie still lying there.

She ran to the spot and looked, aghast. Then, dropping to the ground, she took Nokomis' head tenderly and laid it in her lap.

"Oh, Nokomis, Nokomis!" she mourned, her little hand smoothing the ruffled neck affectionately.

I told her how it had happened, and she gazed at me, dry-eyed, till I had finished. Then she put the collie's beautiful head down, straightened out the body and finally broke into sobs that shook her whole body. I let her cry it out.

She looked up at me, her face drawn and tear-stained.

"Poor old Nokomis!" was all she could say.

I took her hand and helped her up, then led her gently away, as I had led Edna away only yesterday. It was the same hand I took, but it was so cold and weak! It was the same face I saw, but it was so shadowed with sadness! It was the same voice I

heard, but then it had been proud and careless—now it was so tremulously stricken!

"To think that I should have killed Nokomis!" she said.

"It wasn't you, dear!"

"How do I know? If I could be sure!" was her doubting answer.

Then she wheeled about and faced me. She put both her hands on my shoulders and clung desperately to me.

"Chester," she cried, "take me, if you will—if you dare! I don't know any more what's right and what's wrong. The White Cat is blind! I must have you—I want you! I can't live without your help! I'll give it all up, now, and let you act; for I shall die anyway, if such a thing as this should happen again. Next time it may be Leah—it may be even you! If you can save me, I'll marry you. I consent to the engagement—I'll say 'yes' with all my heart, with all gratitude and all love. It's wrong and cowardly, I'm afraid, but you and Leah are all I have."

I kissed her on the lips, and put on her finger the little old seal ring I wore.

"Then we must be married," I said.

She freed herself and took a step back.

"Oh, no! Not yet!" she said sadly. "No, not even yet! When you have tried your plan—and I give you leave, now—when you have succeeded in freeing me—then we will be married. Oh, you must free me first—I can't share you with Edna—you must destroy her, before she destroys me!"

"Very well," I said. "I can't urge you further, though I am afraid there is a great risk in delay. I must go up to town first, and I shall have to leave you here, of course. I doubt if I could manage Edna, should she appear to-morrow while we're in town. But I shall return as soon as possible—to-morrow at the latest. Now I must get ready to take the one o'clock train up."

As we sat in the library waiting for Uncle Jerdon, Joy took up the crystal prism and watched abstractedly the rainbow spot upon the ceiling.

"You're leaving for the second time," she said. "It's the end of the second quest, isn't it? I'm afraid the White Cat has no piece of cloth fine enough to give her Prince, though."

I pointed up at the streak of prismatic color.

"There's a veil of beauty as wonderful as that the king's son brought home. Surely it's fine and subtle enough to pass through the eye of a cambric needle!"

She handed the crystal to me with a tender smile.

"Keep it, Son of a King! And, if you win me, I'll see you clad in those rainbow hues all my life long!"

At one o'clock I was in the train on the way to town, deliberating my plan and arranging for the preparations I must make.

Part Third

I

I started back for Midmeadows at ten o'clock the next day. It was a fine breezy morning and the country-side was full of odors. The sky was an intense blue, abounding in great rolling white clouds which spotted it like the continents and islands of a huge map upon which some titanic Napoleon was continually carving and remodeling new realms and empires of the firmament.

I paid less attention to them, however, than I did to the mental empire it was now my purpose to overthrow. If thunder and lightning could burst the cloud that kept the sunshine from my sweetheart's life, I was determined to conjure that storm.

I had, during my few hours in town, consulted a medical friend upon Joy's case, and while he gave no professional approval to my project, he had not denied the possibility

of its being effective in producing a cure. Such conditions as Miss Fielding's were by no means rare, but they had been so little studied, except phenomenally, that there was no authorized course of treatment known. Each had to be dealt with according to its especial characteristics, and according to circumstances. He had talked to me a good deal concerning "subliminal selves," of the theory of "successive planes of consciousness" and of "isolated personalities," ending with the statement that, so far as any definite knowledge of the psychology of multiple or dissociated personality was concerned, even doctors were the merest laymen. Of its actual rationale they knew virtually nothing, though in some cases the disintegrated personalities had been synthesized into a normal self by means of hypnotic treatment.

I had left Joy herself, yesterday, and, in view of her accelerated alternations, due to the doctor's influence, I had every reason to expect to find Edna to-day in control. My

chief hope was that she and Leah were still upon amicable terms, and that they would be alone in the house. But there had been time for many things to happen, and I awaited the news with considerable anxiety, though braced for any ordeal that might come—except, of course, what did come. I dismissed the carriage at the lane and walked the rest of the way.

There was no sign of life outside the house; I went up to the front door and knocked. It was some time before my summons was answered, and then, to my dismay, by Doctor Copin. This was worse than I had feared.

"Oh, how d'you do, Castle?" he said, making no move to let me in.

"I'm down again, you see. I believe Miss Fielding is expecting me," I said, as coolly as I could.

He stood with his hand on the door, defending the entrance. "I'm very sorry to say that Miss Fielding is not well to-day, and she can't see you."

"Can't see me! Why, that's impossible. She knows perfectly well that I was to return to-day!"

"She's said nothing about it to me, if she does. At any rate, she's in no condition to see anybody, and I must ask you to leave."

"Would you mind telling her that I'm here?" I said.

"I'll speak to her, if you like, though I don't particularly care to disturb her at present. Wait a moment, and I'll see how she is."

He shut the door and, I think, locked it. I waited on the step, hoping for a sight of Leah, and trying to make up my mind what to do if I were refused admittance. I might attempt to enter by force, but, with the doctor there, I could not possibly put my project into action. He finally reappeared with a long face.

"Miss Fielding begs to be excused," he announced.

"It's most extraordinary; I must insist on seeing her!" I cried.

"You certainly don't wish to force yourself in where you're not wanted?" he insinuated.

"If I were sure I wasn't wanted, no. But I don't believe you took my message in to her at all."

"I'll accept that insult, Mr. Castle, and we'll settle it at some other time. Just now, I must ask you to leave immediately. You may happen to recall what I told you the last time we met. As Miss Fielding's fiancé it is not only my right but my duty to see that you go."

"And do you recall my own words on that occasion? I have as good a right to insist upon entering!" I maintained.

"Well, well, this is no time to discuss that, for my presence is needed in the house," he replied. "As I am engaged to Miss Fielding, No. 2, if you please to accept that designation, and as it is No. 2 who is at present receiving me, you'll perhaps see the force of my claim."

It was infamous to have to stand bicker-

ing with him, and, as it could do no good to enact a scene, I turned away, lifted my hat and bade him "good morning!" He bowed, shut the green door, and this time I distinctly heard the key turn in the lock.

I was for a moment at a loss how to proceed, but walked slowly down the lane. At the bend I looked back and saw Leah at an upper window gesticulating to me. I stopped and watched her.

From her signs I gathered that she wished to meet me, and, being careful to make no signal in return, I passed out of sight and waited. It was fifteen minutes before she appeared, coming through the underbrush, having made a detour from the back of the house to escape observation.

"Oh, Mr. Castle," she said breathlessly, "it's dreadful! The doctor has been down here since early in the forenoon, and he has been with Edna all the time, shut up in the library."

"What are they doing? Could you see or hear?"

"Oh, what *aren't* they doing!" she exclaimed, turning away. "It's unbearable. I don't see how you can stand it!"

"I can't stand it! I won't stand it! I'll break down the door if they won't let me in!" I broke out. "I'll kill him!"

Leah caught my hand and stopped me. "It's no use," she said, "Edna herself won't let you in, I'm afraid. She's different this morning. I never saw her so much under his influence. Usually she jokes with him and teases him in all sorts of ways, but to-day she's more quiet and determined."

"Has she treated you badly?"

"No—if it were only that, I wouldn't care. It's something more dangerous. She's crafty and secret. It's sinister. It makes my flesh crawl!"

"Do you know how long the doctor will stay?"

"He's going back this afternoon, I think. That's why he's working so hard with her, I suppose. She's like a bird with a serpent —she's fascinated by him."

"What did he say to her—did you hear?"

"He has been hypnotizing her. I heard him say, *'You will be Edna, Edna, Edna!'*—he repeated it over and over."

"You must go back to the house, then, immediately. You mustn't be missed on any account. Do your best to placate her and avoid trouble. I'll watch in the old cabin till he goes past. As soon as he's out of the way, I'll come."

She was off on the instant through the wood toward the back of the house. I walked down the lane and along the highroad a little way, to the deserted cabin. Here I took my post behind a window and waited patiently.

A couple of hours went by. It was an eternity to me. A hundred times I decided to go and break down the door of the house and have it out with the doctor. I had a couple of revolvers in my bag and the temptation to shoot him on sight was strong. When I thought of what was probably going on in the house—of Joy's body, perhaps, at

his mercy—it was all I could do to remember that my intervention at this moment would ruin all hopes of her eventual release from his power. I bore it for her sake, with my teeth gritted, thinking mad thoughts.

At last I heard the rattle of wheels and saw the carriage approach. Uncle Jerdon was driving; the doctor, smoking a cigar, was laughing complacently. I shrank out of sight till they had passed. Then I left the cottage and ran up the lane.

Edna was sitting outside on the door-step as I approached, but, on seeing me, she rose and went quickly inside, shutting the door. She was indeed different, if she failed to welcome me. My heart fell, but I went up to the door and knocked. No answer. I knocked again, and, after a long wait, Leah appeared.

By her first glance at me, and an almost imperceptible nod of her head toward the library door, I knew that Edna was near by, watching and listening. I was not surprised, therefore, when, in answer to my greeting and question, Leah replied:

"Miss Fielding is sorry that she can't see you to-day. She's not well. She says that she sent you that word before."

"Mayn't I even speak to her for a moment?" I asked.

"She begs that you will excuse her, Mr. Castle." Leah's eyes gave me another sign.

"Very well, then; tell her I'm much disappointed, but I won't trouble her again." I added a gesture in the direction of the lane and walked away without looking back. I felt that Edna was watching from the library window. Leah closed the door.

I went a little way down the lane, searching my mind for some means of combating this unlooked-for *contretemps.* I had discovered a possible way out before Leah appeared, a half-hour later.

"Oh, I'm afraid she'll miss me this time!" she said, her eyes wide and frightened. "I took my chances, though, and you must be quick. What shall I do?"

"I am going over to the Harbor," I said.

"I shall be back, probably in about an hour and a half, and I'll wait here for you. You must find some excuse for coming again. Then I'll give you your instructions. If anything happens that positively prevents your coming, hang a towel out of my window. That's all now; go back!"

She flew back to the house, and I started for the village, where I knew there was an apothecary's shop. In forty minutes I had, with some difficulty, procured what I wanted, a bottle of chloroform. But it was two hours before I got back to Midmeadows. Approaching the house, and keeping carefully hidden by the trees, I saw that there was no signal at the window, and knew that I could expect Leah. I retired a few yards beyond the curve and waited for her.

It was by this time about half-past six o'clock in the evening, and it was still light and warm, though the shadows were long about the old house. I had done a deal of waiting that day, and it had begun to tell on me. It was a great relief when Leah ap-

peared, looking about anxiously. I came out from hiding.

"How goes it?" I asked.

"All right, but she's been restless and fretful. I shouldn't have been able to get off possibly, if she hadn't decided to take a walk before supper. She's gone up over the hill. What are you going to do, Mr. Castle?"

I handed her the bottle, and as she caught sight of the label her hand shook so that she nearly dropped it.

"What we'll have to do is to put her to sleep, so that Joy may return. I don't know, of course, whether it will work or not, but it's the only way I can think of. Have the bottle ready, hidden in the library, and wait till she sits down to supper. Then go in quickly, soak your handkerchief with the chloroform, come up behind her, and hold it to her face tightly—with all your strength, for she'll struggle—till her head drops. You must act quickly and firmly. If she has the slightest suspicion of anything, you'll fail, and we're lost. As soon as you've laid

her on the floor, call me. I'll be right outside, ready to come in."

"But King?" she asked, trying hard to control her excitement.

"If King sees you, or attempts to interfere, tell him that I am trying to drive out Miss Fielding's devil. But he won't, I think. Is Uncle Jerdon there?"

"No, he's gone after the cow—he won't come into the kitchen till after seven o'clock, when he's through with his milking."

"Very well, then. Can you do it? Have you the nerve?"

"Yes. I'll do anything to bring back Miss Joy!"

She held herself erect, her lips compressed, looking at me bravely, though immensely agitated. I knew that whatever the struggle might cost her, I could rely upon her to rise to the situation. I sent her away with a final word of encouragement.

I waited some ten minutes more; then cautiously approached the house, went close to the library window, and looked in.

It was not long before I saw Miss Fielding enter from the hall door, take up a paper, look it over listlessly, and then, at the sound of King's gong, go into the dining-room and take her seat. This was just outside my range of vision, but occasionally, as she leaned back, I caught sight of her head. Leah passed and repassed several times, waiting upon her. I watched in an excited suspense.

I had begun to fear that the girl had lost her courage, when I saw her suddenly dart into the library, take the bottle from behind the books in one of the cases, and open it, drenching her handkerchief. At that very moment Edna must have called; for a moment I saw her head, as she turned round to look into the library. Then it disappeared again. Leah stole back into the dining-room, with the handkerchief held behind her.

She stopped back of Edna's chair. Then her right hand flew round with the handkerchief, and her left covered it. There was a short hard struggle, as Edna tried to free

herself, but Leah held firm, crouching behind her mistress, tense and determined.

I waited for no more, but ran to the front door, through the library and into the dining-room.

Miss Fielding sat huddled into her chair, limp, inert, her arms hanging at her sides. Leah still stood behind her, staring, her eyes showing the whites above her pupils, her lips parted. She remained as if transfixed at the sight of what she had done.

I seized the unconscious form, and, taking it up in my arms, bore it into the library and laid it upon the couch in the window. Leah followed, without a word, still staring stupidly. I thrust her, then, into a chair, fearing that she might faint.

Then I stooped over Miss Fielding, calling, "Joy! Joy! Joy!"

II

I called her name involuntarily, I suppose, yet there was in my motive, too, a dim idea that the suggestion might in some way influence her to awaken as Joy, rather than as Edna. I did my best, meanwhile, to assist her to revive, fanning her with a newspaper and chafing her hands.

Long before she came to herself, however, there began a convulsive struggle that was one of the most terrible things I had to witness in all my experience with her. It was as if her two selves were fighting for supremacy, for the possession of her body, which was their battle-field. I could only wait helplessly for that fierce struggle gradually to expend itself in tremblings and in sighs, while I called her again and again, now with a definite idea of hypnotic suggestion. The conflict seemed to go on for a

long, long time, though in point of fact it lasted, I think, only a few minutes. At the end, she drew a long, deep breath, relaxed, and opened her eyes. Almost immediately she was overcome by a violent nausea, and, attending to her and soothing her, it was some time before we knew with whom we had to deal. Her first words reassured me.

"Chester!" she exclaimed, "you've come back! I'm so glad, but I'm terrified—what has happened?"

I kissed her, kneeling on the floor beside her, stroking her hand. "Don't worry, dear," I said, "it's all right now."

She started up with a glad look on her face, misinterpreting my words.

"Oh, is it finished, then? Have we won? Is Edna driven away for ever?"

I had to tell her that it was not yet even begun, but that, God willing, I should soon be ready to put my plan to the test. She was disheartened and discouraged at that; it was as if she had gone through an unsuccessful operation, she was so exhausted and

fearful, but in the end I succeeded in reassuring her somewhat, and she was restored to calmness and courage to bear the suspense. As soon as she felt better we went outdoors for a while, and the fresh, cool air brought back her spirits. There I told her just what had happened, and what we had to expect. Then, as I had eaten nothing since morning, I went back with her to the dining-room and we had supper with Leah.

"Chester," she said, "you've said enough to make me afraid of what you intend to do. I can't yet be sure that we have the right to destroy Edna. And I must be surer that Doctor Copin has betrayed me. I've known him too long to let him go without proving it. I must see him and have a talk with him first; then, if I am thoroughly convinced, you may go ahead. But I want to know just what it is you intend to do."

There, at least, I stood firm. "I hope you'll never find out," I said. "I intend to cut out the cancer—that's enough for you to know. But, as to the doctor, I'm positively

afraid to trust you with him. And yet, it would be well to know just what he's up to. He may come to-morrow morning, too, which will prevent my doing anything, whether it's you or Edna who is here. And I can't risk the chance of being interrupted. He may not come, however, as he'll naturally expect you to be here to-morrow, unless Edna's making faster progress than she has heretofore. And even if I could put you to sleep now, Uncle Jerdon's being in the house will prevent my acting."

It was here that Leah put in the first suggestion that she had volunteered.

"Miss Joy," she said, "I have an idea how you might find out what you want to know, and perhaps the doctor's plans as well, if you'd consent to do it. I don't know whether you'll think it's right or not—I've been trying to decide for myself, but I can't."

"Let's have it, at any rate," I said. "We've left right and wrong so far behind, now, that they're quite out of sight."

"If Leah has even thought of it enough

to propose it, I'll take my chances on its being justifiable," Joy added.

"Here it is, then," said Leah. "You want to know what the doctor is doing with Edna and to Edna, don't you?"

"That's it," said Joy.

"Then why not pretend to be Edna when he comes?"

"By Jove!" I cried. "There's an idea!"

"But I couldn't possibly do it!" Joy objected.

Leah explained further. "Mr. Castle and I will teach you. We have all night before us, and we'll have to stay up, anyway, to make sure that it is *you* who meets the doctor. During that time you can learn your part. It will be hard work, but I know you can do it."

"It will at least keep us awake," Joy smiled at last.

"And then, early in the morning, you, as Edna, can telephone to him and ask him to come down."

"He'll come," I said. "He'll be only too

glad to find that Edna has had two days running."

Joy began to enter into the humor of the situation. "I'll not have to make up for the part, at least, shall I? And Edna's costumes will fit me. But do you think I can really do it?"

I was convinced that she could. "When you think that he will be predisposed to find you Edna, and how little cause he has to suspect such impersonation, and moreover how much more like you Edna is becoming, I think that there's very little risk," I said. "The best part of the plan is that after it's over the doctor is likely to go back and he'll be safely out of the way for my experiment."

"Oh, your experiment! How it terrifies me! What are we doing to that poor girl? What possible crime am I consenting to?" Joy broke down again.

Leah put her hand on Joy's arm and looked at her. "You'll do it for my sake, Miss Joy?" she pleaded. I knew well enough that she was not urging her own dan-

ger, despite her words. She was desirous only of Joy's peace—but her words had their effect.

"And for mine," I saw fit to add. The double appeal stilled Joy's protest.

We began, therefore, to instruct Joy in her part, and I think that she learned more of her secondary self that night than she had known in all the rest of her life put together. It was not easy for her, at first, to abandon herself to the character, and assume the *gaucherie* that was typical of Edna. It was hardest of all to do what, indeed, I was loath to teach her, the little coquetries and familiarities which I imagined Edna to be in the habit of lavishing upon the doctor. But there was a humor, as well as a pathos, in the play, and occasionally the fun of it overthrew our seriousness.

So we went over and over the plot that night. Edna's languishing glances, Edna's awkward poses and active gestures, Edna's quick speech and obvious sallies, her impatient, pettish whims, all were rehearsed.

Joy, becoming gradually interested in doing her best, threw herself into the attempt. Her mimicry of Edna was a strangely confusing sight—it was like one mirror reflected in another. I took the doctor's part, going through the motions of hypnotizing her, teaching her how to resist while simulating sleep, how to reply, how to awaken from the trance. I prepared her for every complication that I could think of, not forgetting Edna's characteristic treatment of Leah—and I think that this part of her acting did more than anything else, through her indignation, to stimulate her to do her best on the morrow.

Besides all this, she was to do whatever occurred to her at the moment, taking her cue from the doctor. She had, I impressed upon her, always the resource at hand of a pretended fainting fit, after which she might plausibly awaken in her real character as Joy. In any case, I surmised that her failure to enact the part consistently would be attributed by him to her primary self's par-

tial projection into consciousness. And, after all, there were, of course, many points of resemblance between the two women, and with moderate care, he would never suspect that she was feigning. It would scarcely have been possible for Edna to have taken the character of Joy.

It was nearly dawn before we felt that we had gone far enough to be willing to risk her facility; and then, to freshen ourselves up, we went outdoors. The air was cool and invigorating; it was a beautiful night of stars and cloud. About the house the trees waved and rustled. The mass of woods across the garden was black in shadow. I smelt mint mingled with violets.

I took her arm, but it was she who guided me through the obscurity, knowing every inch of the way through long acquaintance. The dogs awoke and growled as we passed the stable, but instantly relapsed into silence as if aware of the presence of friends. A horse whinnied in his stall. We climbed the hill, Joy feeling for the concavity of the path

with sensitive feet and leading me on; and at the top we sat down, wrapped a shawl about our shoulders and waited for the day to break. We could hear the dogs barking far away. The second crowing of cocks sent challenges from one distant farm to another; infinitely remote a railway whistle sounded. After an hour the twittering of birds began, at first in occasional chirps, and finally in a chorus of matutinal gossip. The sky in the east grew pink, then, through red and orange and yellow, to a pale straw color. The limb of the sun pushed through the sea, freed itself from the horizon and floated up and up, flooding the country with light.

We walked back to the house, rejuvenated by the fresh air, and had our baths and hot coffee which Leah had ready for us. Joy was full of spirit and courage. The lines about her eyes were softened and her whole figure and bearing expressed determination. At eight o'clock she said:

"Well, let's ring up the curtain. I must begin the play. It's time to telephone. I'm

going to tell the first lie I've told, I think, for months. You've no idea how unnecessary it has been down here. I'm afraid I've almost forgotten how to be a woman."

She got the doctor, and after a short conversation he promised to come down to Midmeadows on a train that would land him at the house at ten o'clock. We went over the day's campaign at the breakfast-table, and I gave her my last instructions. At nine o'clock Uncle Jerdon drove up, and I got into the carriage to go to the station, bidding her good-by, for his benefit.

The old man was loquacious as usual, but offered nothing in regard to affairs at Midmeadows. He commented upon the crops and the state of every farm we passed, without ever touching upon Miss Fielding's condition. If this were his custom with every one, no man could be safer to have about the premises, but I had an idea he was more communicative with the doctor. At any rate, it had seemed best to me to make him believe that I was going up to town.

I had already prepared the plan by which I was to outwit them both. The up-train came into the station first, while the down-train waited on a siding for it to pass. All I had to do was to bid Uncle Jerdon good-by, get into the smoking-car, and, as it pulled out, drop off the step and dodge quickly behind a woodpile beside the track. Here I waited, peeping over the top till the down-train had gone and I saw Doctor Copin get into the carriage to drive off with Uncle Jerdon. Then I walked leisurely back to Mid-meadows, went into the cabin and waited with what patience I could.

I had to stay from ten till two o'clock, before I saw the carriage go back with its passenger. That wait had been long, but it was not so anxious a time as I had spent before, for I knew that Joy would be quite able to cope with the situation. But I was relieved to see the carriage go back, and left the cabin the moment the vehicle was out of sight.

I had gone only half-way up the lane when I saw Joy coming to meet me. She looked

tired and pale. She ran to my arms and kissed me.

"Oh, he's infamous!" she cried. "I never would have believed it of him!"

"He didn't suspect you, then?" I asked anxiously.

"Suspect? No, he was too busy with his own machinations for that. Chester, if you had been there, I think you would have killed him! And I acted—how I acted! I got more and more in a rage, and I led him on with every bit of cunning I had till I had found out his worst. Oh, it was vile!"

I tried to hide my own rising fury. "What happened?" I demanded.

"Oh, I *can't* tell you! Let me try to forget it! He did everything that we have suspected, and more! I let him borrow money of me—I permitted his familiarities and his vulgarity as long as I could endure it—I listened to all his schemes. Why, Chester, d'you know, he is trying to destroy me, and make *her* take my place permanently? He hasn't a scruple! He's after my money,

and, worst of all, after *me!* It's incredible. Oh, if you can't outwit him, I'm lost!"

"There's only one sure way, now, to foil him, Joy. You must marry me this afternoon!"

"I thought of that, too," she said, "and I think I'm ready. This forenoon has opened my eyes to the danger. If you say so, we'll go over to the Harbor. Oh, Chester, can you really marry such a mutilated, enslaved person as I am?"

"I am going to free you," I said, still holding her close.

"And Edna—" she broke away to look at me fearfully. "What will you do with Edna?"

"To-morrow there will, I hope, no longer be such a person."

"Then shan't we wait till to-morrow?"

"You forget," I said, "that, at his first opportunity, it is possible for *him* to marry *her!* The risk is too great!"

"That settles it—come to the house and we'll get Leah!"

My hopes reached to the skies, then, and I was sure that I could conquer anything and everything that stood between me and the fulfilment of her rescue. With the surrender, she, too, gave herself up completely to the occasion. We took hands and raced up the lane like two children. In that moment I got a fresh glimpse of what sort of person Joy really was, when she was free. Edna's galumphing was not more gay and abandoned, Edna's laugh never rang out more merrily. When we burst into the house I think that Leah, for a moment, thought we had both gone mad.

We did not even wait for Uncle Jerdon to return with the carriage. I went out to see that my motor-car was in order, while Joy, laughing with Leah so gaily that I could hear them even from the stable, prepared for the trip.

Joy threw up her window, to call out: "Chester, I want that little chain Edna gave you! I must have 'something old and something new, something borrowed, something

blue'!'' I knew, then, that the last trace of feeling at that incident had disappeared.

She came down all in white—hat, veil, gown, gloves, stockings, shoes, parasol. Leah, too, was dressed for the occasion, modestly, as usual; for, though she could well have carried off a modish toilet, she always shrank from being in the least conspicuous, as if fearing to compromise Joy by appearing to assume a social equality. She was in a frock of écru linen, just severe enough in its trim design to keep her place with Joy's bewitching laces and flounces and chiffon. I myself made a sorry-looking bridegroom, I fear, for I had found something to do under the belly of my machine, and the employment did the only costume I had little good.

So, bidding King good-by, we were off with enthusiasm. Even Leah had caught the infection of our high spirits—for a moment the tension had been let down all along the line. Leah had, indeed, much reason to be happy. She had implicit confidence in my ability to frustrate the doctor's plans, she

saw herself now safe with Joy, she anticipated for her mistress a new beatitude. Under the influence of this, I noticed that she lapsed, for the first time in my experience, partly into a negro dialect. It was the more remarkable and significant because I had seen her under the stress of fear and horror, and neither had affected her speech. It showed me how rare perfect happiness had been in her life, that this glint of joy should break the bonds of her speech and unloose the tongue of her girlhood. Both Joy and I laughed freely at her, and she herself laughed with us.

We raced madly for the Harbor, sought the Methodist minister there, went into his cool prim front parlor, were introduced to his wife—who had that day enough to gossip about, I'll warrant—and the thing was done in ten minutes. Then we piled happily into the car and pelted home.

Joy looked at me with new eyes. "You've done it, haven't you?"

"You bet I have!"

"How did you ever manage it! I thought I had refused you!"

"I don't understand it myself. It just happened. It had to be."

"You ought to be a highwayman!"

"It's partly *your* fault, you know!"

"And I've known you only a month! How reckless! It must have been that incorrigible, irresistible, unexpected, unkissed nick in your chin! I've gone from new moon to full, at a bound! Now I'm a bride-rampant: I could fight my way to you through eight miles of jungle! Was I pretty, Leah?" She turned and held out her hand.

" 'Deed you *were,* Miss Joy, honey, I never see you' beat!"

How she laughed! "And you were the sweetest bridesmaid, too! See her eyes, Chester, *please* look round! Never mind if we do run into a tree, to-day. Did you ever see such hidden depths of gold as are beneath her eyes? Isn't that color and outline perfect? There's no wildfire or heroics about Leah, but she's got more brains than

both of us put together! And she's got a southern accent now, that you couldn't dissipate with an electric battery. Leah, you're as beautiful as a jaguar! Can't you go faster, chauffeur, dear? I'd rather eat flypaper than ride in a slow automobile! Say, it's awfully stimulating to get married, isn't it? I'm going to do it all the time, after this."

I leaned over to kiss her, and we nearly ran into the depot-wagon on its way from the train. We were followed by two dozen eyes till we were hidden by a turn of the road.

So her brain coined as we sped along, shrieking with laughter. But Joy's frolic mood subsided as we approached Midmeadows. She looked at me plaintively and said:

"The idea of the White Cat's being married before she's had her head and tail cut off!"

"Oh, that'll be done before you know it!" I said. "What I'm thinking is that now Doctor Copin will never be allowed at Mid-

meadows again, if I have to keep him out by force. With him out of the way, we can manage the rest. But no more of that now. It's our wedding day! We ought to have told King to bake a cake!"

We had quieted down enough by supper-time to talk the matter over calmly and plan for to-morrow. The time had, queerly enough, more the effect of parting than the beginning of a new and happy life. Joy grew wistful and *distraite* as the evening wore on. I would not let her talk of "the murder," as she called it, and I tried to keep her mind from returning to the mystery of Edna's presence. Finally she said:

"Chester, I'd like to send her a message. Just think, I've never had any communication with her!"

"It will do no good," I replied.

"It will do no harm," she insisted. "I may never have another chance. I'm going to write a note for you to give her, if she comes to-morrow. Will you?"

I said that of course I would, and she sat

down at her secretary and, after thinking a few minutes, biting her pen, she wrote this:

DEAR EDNA:— What has brought us together we can never know. But it is terrible to me to think that, being so closely and mysteriously related, we could not have been friends. For all you have done to me and mine, I forgive you, and somewhere and somehow I hope that you will forgive me for everything I have done to you.

JOY FIELDING.

It was the first specimen I had happened to see of Joy's handwriting, and was, as she had said, quite different from Edna's. It was bold and flowing, sharply slanted and graceful, the hand of a fast writer and a quick thinker. I put the note into my pocket to give to-morrow to Edna. I should but pass it back to the same hands that had written it, it would be read by the same eyes that saw it now—but I could guess with what scorn and anger it would be received.

Joy bade me good night with a tremor in her voice, gave me a long, clinging kiss, and looked up into my eyes.

"I'm not really your wife yet, you know, Chester," she said.

" 'Come slowly, Eden,' " I quoted.

"And I may never be—" The tears filled her eyes.

"Do you think I shall fail, after to-day?" I said.

"I still have my revolver, if you do. Remember the White Cat, and your promise!"

"That's a sad thought for a wedding-night! I'm going to save you!"

"Poor Edna!" she said, releasing herself. Then, as if she thought it unwifely to leave me sorrowful, she flashed a smile at me, waved her hand, and ran up-stairs.

III

I have said so much of my "plan" that it is now quite time to explain it, for it was of the simplest. Many of the recorded cases of multiple personality, or rather, according to a more modern interpretation of the state, dissociated personality, had arisen, I found, from a shock, sometimes purely physical, sometimes mental. It was my idea that in Miss Fielding's case the process might be reversed—that I might inhibit her secondary self by some violent excitement. A long process of hypnotic treatment might, I knew, effect a cure more or less stable, but the doctor's superior knowledge and, heretofore, his superior advantages, had made me doubt of succeeding in that way. To take her to any competent specialist was inexpedient, for the

reason that we should meet with a steady opposition from Edna, who could do much to make such a course impossible.

The means I intended to employ were, I must confess, brutal; I intended to frighten Edna to within an inch of her life—to frighten her, that is, so that she might be afraid to reappear. This explanation is superficial, but it conveys the idea; what really would happen, I thought, was that Joy would "wake up" and resume permanently her normal condition. I was not competent to explain the rationale of it; I trusted, in a way, to the mere reversion of the processes that had been described in similar cases of disintegrated personalities.

Exactly how to accomplish this end I was not yet decided, save that I had prepared myself with a pair of revolvers and blank cartridges; I left the actual operation to the inspiration of the moment, taking advantage of the circumstances. I knew that the mental shock must be severe, and that the tension should be prolonged almost to the breaking

point. In some way or other it would come to threatening her life. In my mind it was like deliberately breaking a badly-set bone that it might heal again aright. So desperate a remedy I had not wanted to describe to Joy, nor did I ever expect to tell her, even should her cure be effected.

Of the cruelty to Edna, I had no thought. I knew no other way of accomplishing what I desired, and my sympathies, naturally, were entirely with Joy. She alone, surely, had a right to exist in that fair body. Seeing that I could not settle the ethical considerations involved, and that they only impaired my will, I cast them aside. I offer no other excuse for my conduct. It seemed expedient, in fact the only thing that would be effectual, in ridding my wife of her incubus. If it were wrong, well, I would take the blame. I have never been able to settle the question in my own mind, even yet.

She slept late the next morning. I was down-stairs when she rang for Leah, and so heard nothing, but it was no surprise to me

when, a few minutes later, Leah came down and said:

"It's Edna."

The fight was on. I was now prepared to undertake (as it would certainly seem to a spectator) to torture my wife of a day half to death. I shall not attempt to describe my own feelings as I anticipated the prospect.

"Has she tried to telephone?" I asked. My voice, I imagine, was now like that of a surgeon at an operation asking his assistant for a knife.

"No," said Leah.

"Hurry up, then. You must manage to overhear what she says, if possible. I must know whether the doctor's coming or not. Have you sent Uncle Jerdon away?"

"He's harnessing up to go to the Harbor, and he'll be gone all the forenoon."

"Good."

She went into the kitchen and prepared Edna's breakfast, while I crept up-stairs and listened to hear in case she telephoned. As soon as Leah went up with the breakfast tray,

I went down again and walked into the kitchen.

"King," I said, looking square at the Chinaman, "to-day I'm going to drive the devil out of Miss Fielding. You sabbee?"

He grinned very good-naturedly. "Yep, I sabbee," he answered, paring his potatoes calmly.

"Maybe I make heap noise. You sabbee?"

"Yep, I sabbee!" again.

"You no mind me, King? You not be frightened?"

He laughed and said: "Aw, no! I no care. Maybe I come help. I sabbee debbil all light!"

"No, I won't need your help, King. I can do it alone, I think. All I want, you stay here, and not be frightened."

"Aw, I no flighten'. What's a-matter? You no think so?"

"Well, you don't know anything about it. Sabbee? You must keep quiet, sure."

"Oh, I sabbee all light. Maybe somebody ask me, I say, 'I not know!' I sabbee. I say,

'You go-to-hell!' he-he!" He laughed to himself. "You heap good man, you all light, sure. Dlive away debbil, tha's all. Wha's a-matter? You no sabbee me? Aw?" He turned away in scorn at my distrust.

I was pretty sure that I could trust to his imperturbability, and returned to the library satisfied, leaving King still chuckling inanely to himself.

In a moment Leah came down again and said hurriedly to me:

"She's just telephoned. She said nothing about yesterday, or that you were here! He must have said he wasn't coming down today, or at least not this morning, for she tried to tease him to come. She's all dressed up—it's astonishing—I can't tell you!" She left me and immediately afterward I heard Edna's footsteps on the stairs.

For what reason she had dressed herself so extravagantly—whether from sheer wilful fancy, or a desire to tantalize me or to seduce me from my fondness of Joy—I have never decided. She wore an evening gown

of gold tissue, sheer as gossamer, fold on fold, embroidered with gold threads all over the low-necked corsage. About her forehead was a garland of gold laurel leaves, beautifully modeled and tooled, interlaced with a slender string of coral beads. Her arms were bare. On her right breast was a red velvet rose, she had stockings of scarlet silk and golden slippers. It was a costume for a fancy-dress ball and had indeed been originally made for that purpose. To see her appear, now, and shine in the morning sunlight like a butterfly, was to see something as extraordinary as it was picturesque.

She came to me with all Joy's grace, and held out her hand, laughing.

"So you're here again after all, Chet," she said. "I thought I'd dress up for you. You've never seen me to advantage. How do you like it?" She turned slowly round for my benefit.

"You're an empress!" I exclaimed. "I don't deserve this honor!"

She began dancing a minuet all alone, speaking as she swirled.

"Indeed you don't! I didn't want you here yesterday, really. But now you've come down again, you'd better stay." She curtsied demurely. "But look out for the doc—tor!" She was off again in a circle. "I suppose it was Joy who invited you! I'll have to entertain Joy's guest, I suppose. There! Now sit down and talk to me."

What was behind her whimsical mood, and why she so willingly received me, I could not guess. When I had taken a seat she tapped me with her fan and said:

"You know I've always liked you, Chet, but you see the doctor thought it wasn't best for me to have you about. Really, I oughtn't to let you stay now. He'd be perfectly furious, you know. He thought you had gone up to town. You must hide, if he comes."

"Trust me for that," I said.

"So Joy wants you to come?" she continued. "I suppose you'd never come down

just to see *me!* You must tell me about Joy. Is she nice?"

"She's lovely. Oh, you'd love her, Edna. It's a pity you can't know her. It would save so much trouble!"

"Oh, are you in love with her, then?"

"I'm very fond of her!"

She slapped her fan viciously and bit her lip. Then:

"I'm sure you like her much better than you do me, anyway—don't you?"

"I know her better than I do you, Edna, and she has always been nice to me."

"And haven't I? Didn't I dress up for you, sir?"

"I have a letter to you from her—would you like to read it?"

She held out her hand for it instantly, and I gave her the note. She glanced it over, then tore it up spitefully.

"Cat!" she exclaimed. "If I could only see her, if I could only talk to her once! I'd tell her what I thought of her! Oh, I'll give her something to forgive!" She looked

about her, as if for something particularly Joy's upon which to vent her anger.

Just then, as luck would have it, Leah entered the room with a vase of flowers.

"Get out of here, you black hussy!" Edna cried. "Don't you see I'm busy? Your place is in the kitchen!"

Leah turned and left without a word.

"I've stood enough from that nigger," Edna said. "I'm going to get rid of her this very day."

"You said you'd keep her as long as I stayed," I interposed.

"Oh, *Joy* asked you to plead for her, I suppose! You're only here hoping to get a chance to see *Joy,* anyway! How did you get in yesterday, anyway? What happened? I'd forgotten all about that! What did I do in the evening? I can't remember. Were you here then, with Joy?"

"You fainted away at the dinner-table——"

"So you had your evening with Joy all right? Oh, what do you care for me? Noth-

ing! You *hate* me, I believe!" The next moment she was crying, but, before I could assuage her, she had risen abruptly and run up-stairs.

I passed quickly into the kitchen and spoke to Leah.

"Has Uncle Jerdon gone?"

"Yes."

"Then keep out of the way as much as possible. I'm almost ready."

I went up to my own room and took the revolvers from my hand-bag and loaded them with the blank cartridges. Scarcely had I slipped the weapons into my pocket when Edna burst into the room with her arms full of dresses. She held out the pale green silk peignoir in which I had first seen Miss Fielding.

"Does Joy wear this?" she asked.

"Yes, sometimes," I answered.

"Well," she said, "she never will fascinate *you* in it again!" And with a single violent gesture, she ripped it from top to bottom. She took up another gown and tore that in

two, also. She had begun on a third when I went up to her and stopped her hand.

"Edna, you mustn't!" I commanded.

She threw the whole heap upon the floor and clasped her bare arms about my neck. "Oh, I hate her! I *hate* her!" she wept. "You are in love with her, Chet, you know you are! What have I done that you should hate me so? You know how I like you—why don't you love me a little?"

"Aren't you engaged to the doctor?" I asked, letting her stay with her face near mine. It did not seem wrong—it was Joy's own face.

"Oh, I suppose I am, but what does that matter? Mayn't I like you, too? He's the only friend I have. He's helping me! He's trying to free me! What are *you* doing? Are *you* helping me, Chet?"

It was hard enough to answer her question. What could I say? Somehow, even now, I could not lie to her outright—not while looking deep into Joy's own eyes.

"If you had shown any mercy to Joy, if

you even desired to be friends with her, I might try to save you," I said. "But after this, how can I?"

"Oh, I'll be friends with her—I'll do anything if you'll only love me, Chet! Why can't we both love you? I'll promise not to be jealous; we'll share you. If you marry her, then you'll have me, too, and I'll have you!"

She looked up at me with wistful eyes—Joy's eyes—and Joy's arms were still about me. Never had Joy clung to me so closely and tenderly. It was all I could do to put her away and answer her preposterous suggestion.

"But you're engaged to the doctor—he told me so——"

"I'll break it off with him—I won't have anything more to do with him—I'll telephone to him now!" She even started to go to her room.

I was in a tumult of emotion. How could I begin my work when she acted in this way —as I had least expected? True, I knew

that probably in a moment her fickle mood would change, but I could not begin yet. I held her back.

"You know," I said, "that the doctor is plotting to get rid of Joy for ever. You know, and I know, that *that* is the way he's been trying to help you. How can I care for you, when I know that is your purpose?" God knows I loathed myself for the hypocrisy, but I was at my wits' end.

She stopped and looked at me reproachfully. "Ah, you *are* in love with her, then! I thought so! She's everything, and I'm nothing to you!"

She flung away again in a new rage and walked proudly, scornfully down-stairs. I followed her. Just before I caught up with her, I heard her angry voice ring out.

"Oh, you sneak! Didn't I tell you to stay in the kitchen? Take that for your impertinence, you wench!"

There was the sound of a blow and a scream. I ran in and found Leah with her face bleeding. Edna, gorgeous in her silken

gown, stood lowering like a furious queen, a heavy bronze paper-weight in her hand.

"You pack out of this house immediately!" she cried, her voice strident with passion. "I've had enough of your tricks! I want you to know I'm mistress here!"

Leah appealed to me with a glance. I nodded, pointing behind Edna's back, outdoors, to the old cabin. Leah disappeared, weeping. I went up to Edna.

"Do you expect me to love you when you act in this cruel way?" I asked in a quiet tone.

She stormed up and down, striding like a leopard in a cage, swishing this way and that, her fists firmly clenched.

"Oh, she's in league with you and Joy. I know all about it! She spies on me—hides things from me—tells on me! She and you are trying your best to get rid of me—the doctor said so! You are plotting to destroy me right now!" she flashed out, turning to me, her lips quivering with excitement. "I can tell! I know! You may go, too, Mr.

Castle, I'm through with *you,* too! Leave this house, please!"

I tried to pacify her, thinking that, distraught with the violent moods she had shown to-day, a reaction would soon come. She was almost hysterical, and I waited for the revulsion of feeling, without heeding her words. In a moment it came. It was as if an angel and a devil were contending in her for the mastery, but the angel won again.

She sat down limply in a chair that was drawn up to the secretary, and the tears came to her eyes. I saw Leah go out the front door and hurry down the lane.

"Oh, I'm so wretched!" Edna complained bitterly. "I haven't a friend—not even Doctor Copin. All he wants is my money, and all you want is Joy. Oh, Chet, let me be your friend! Let me be your friend—you may stay—I'll be good, sure I will! I'll do anything if you'll only love me and be good to me! I'll take Leah back; I'll dismiss the doctor. Why was I sent here, anyway? Nobody wants me, nobody cares for me!"

She looked up at me and held out her hand. It was the stricken deer appealing for protection to the hunters. I had never seen her so gentle and tender. It was, for the moment, as if Joy herself were pleading for her life.

As I stood there, watching her, debating what to do, her head dropped to her left hand. With her right she had taken up a pencil which lay there, and was abstractedly making marks upon the blotter—circles and crosses and zigzag scrawls. But, even as she turned to me again, her eyes softened, I saw her right hand move more regularly over the paper blotter. She was writing, and writing automatically, without looking at what she was doing. A sudden idea came to me that the writing was inspired by some subconscious, subliminal self and I must let it have free play, that I must divert her thought from that hand.

So I walked up to her and touched her head, stroking her soft, brown hair. "Poor

girl!" I said; "I wish I could answer your questions; I wish I might help you. Perhaps we can think out a way. We'll talk it over and see."

Her hand was still writing, as she looked up at me and listened.

"But you must tell me all about the doctor, and what he is doing. Is he coming down here to-day?"

She leaned affectionately against my side, her hand still working unconsciously. "I don't know," she said. "He may come on the eleven o'clock train, perhaps."

This was unexpected. I had little time, then, in which to act. But now her hand had stopped, and I bent over her shoulder to look at the blotter.

She turned her face to me again and said: "Won't you please kiss me, Chet? You've never kissed me! I'm sure you've kissed Joy!"

Then, following my glance, she saw the writing for the first time. "Oh, how

funny!" she cried. "I've been writing! I didn't know it. What is it, anyway?" Then she read aloud:

"'*Don't hesitate! Cut off my head and my tail! Hurry! White Cat.*'

"How absurd!" she commented. "See, it isn't my handwriting at all! It isn't anything like it. But it's like—*it's Joy's!*" she burst out, and she jumped up, staring at me. "What does it mean?"

I had recognized the handwriting at the same instant, and was as surprised as she.

"It's Joy's!" she repeated, her voice now almost a scream. "Oh, but she *is* a cat! I believe she's trying to get rid of me. She wants you to kill me! Tell me, Chet, what does it mean?"

I didn't answer, for the shock of this communication bewildered me. It was like the voice of a ghost, urging me. It *was* Joy, calling up from Edna's subconsciousness. I was sure of it.

"It's Joy!" she cried a third time as she got the meaning, too. "She's trying to call

you, through me! She loves you, and you love her. I knew it! You're trying to murder me! But I'll not let her have you! I'll kill you first!"

She stood with her little fists doubled, shaking with fury, her nostrils dilated, her cheeks gone white, her lips apart, showing the little uneven line of clenched teeth. The strap of her gown had fallen partly off, leaving one smooth, creamy shoulder bare, the golden wreath of laurel was tipped sidewise in her hair.

Then, in a quick whirlwind of passion, she snatched the silver-handled poker by the fireplace, raised it, and struck at me with all her strength. Slight as she was, and weak, ordinarily, her emotion gave her an unnatural power. The blow grazed my cheek, plowing a deep, ragged furrow through the skin. I grabbed the weapon from her, and she stood defiantly before me, blazing in all her finery.

The time had at last come to act.

IV

I may well say "act," for it was acting that was now necessary. I smarted from her blow, I saw in her a vicious, dangerous fury, with a devil snarling in her, but I had nothing but pity for her. How could I be angry? She was desperate, but it was the frenzy of an irresponsible spirit that urged her. And, moreover, she stood in my own bride's image, beautiful, splendid, virile. She was, in outward seeming, the woman I loved best in all the world. I had, I insist, nothing but the tenderest pity for her whom I must now, if I had the power, harry, harass, torment and destroy. But to accomplish this I had to play a part. I could show no trace of kindness or consideration. So I nerved myself and simulated rage when never was rage further from my heart.

"Oh, you would, would you!" I cried

through my teeth, as villains do upon the stage. "Well, then, Miss Edna, it's time to talk honestly to you. I *am* in love with Joy, and I do hate you with all my heart! I would free Joy if I could, but you and the doctor are too much for us. I know what she's had to endure from him in your own person and her own, and rather than let her go through that outrage again, rather than let his lips touch hers, whether you consent or not, I'll kill you both. I can't touch her, for I love her, but I'm going to kill *you,* now!"

With that I drew a revolver from my pocket and took steady aim at her. Oh, I gave her time! The one thing I was afraid of, then, was that she would dare me to shoot. Luckily her nerve failed her.

She screamed and ran to the door like a deer. She screamed as she dashed up-stairs, tripping over her gown, calling wildly for Leah to come and save her. She screamed again and again as, giving her ample time to escape, I followed after her, shooting once,

twice, thrice, stumbling up after her, muttering histrionic curses. There was no doubt that I had frightened her! But could I keep it up till she was literally beside herself with terror?

"Break the bone and let it heal right again!" I kept repeating to myself. But to break it—ugh! I shuddered and nerved myself again.

She had run into her room, slammed the door and locked it. I threw myself upon it and beat upon the panels with my hands. Again she screamed—the sound sickened me. I cried out that I would kill her, that there was no use in resisting, that I would break down the door. I shouted hoarsely enough, there was no need of pretending, now.

She came to the door and wailed.

"Spare me!" she cried. "Save me, Chet! You were wounded and fainting when I took you into my house. Didn't I do everything for you? How can you! How *can* you! What have I done?"

I fired again to stop her. I couldn't stand

that reproach. Her screams broke out again. I could hear her overthrowing tables and piling them madly in front of the door.

Then her shrieks stopped suddenly, and I heard her running here and there as if searching for something. I heard drawers pulled open and emptied upon the floor, I heard chairs falling. Then there was an instant's lull.

Next, a muffled shot rang out. A bullet ripped through the panel of the door and buried itself in the mahogany wainscoting, missing my head by barely an inch. She had found her revolver—I had forgotten about that. The game was getting serious.

But now it was more necessary than ever to finish. I went down into the hall and shouted to King. He appeared at the dining-room door, his eyes as round as glass marbles, his mouth open.

"Get an ax, King, and bring it up here, quick!"

I went up again and, putting my pistol cautiously to the hole in the panel, fired an-

other blank cartridge. My shot was immediately answered by her revolver, but the bullet went wild.

King came blundering up the stairs with the ax, showing a white mouthful of teeth. I had never thought it possible for him to show so much excitement, but he was quite wild. I took the ax and struck a heavy blow at the panel, splitting it open. Had I really wished to break down the door immediately, I would have aimed at the lock. But I wanted to draw her fire, and to torture her to the limit of suspense and fear.

She screamed again as the wood was ripped into splinters, and two more shots were fired in quick succession, only one of them going through the door. She had spent four cartridges now, and, as she held the last one, I had to act quickly so that she would have no chance to reload.

"You go down-stairs, King," I commanded. "Wait for her when she runs out. I'll chase her outdoors. She has only one shot left, so you needn't be afraid of her.

She was handsome—terrible. *Page 381*

I'll get that bullet, all right. Scream at her, scare her to death if you can, but don't touch her. If you do, by God, I'll kill you!"

He stole noiselessly down the stairs and disappeared. I tried another panel with the ax, but, as she was clever enough not to shoot, I reloaded my first pistol, and, taking what risk there was without thought, I seized the ax again and with one fierce blow smashed the lock to pieces. With the concussion the door fell partly in. I dropped the ax, put my shoulder to the door and swept the barricade inward, darting quickly through with my pistol raised.

She was handsome—terrible. Frightened as she was, she had control of herself yet, and was magnificently defiant, breathing in quick gasps with her mouth open, her bosom heaving, as if she were suffocating. Her embroidered waist was half torn off and hung away from her neck, revealing her brown-white breast, or perhaps she had torn the bodice open herself for air. Her golden wreath was gone. I saw it on the floor,

trampled out of shape. Her hair had fallen over her shoulders, but its disarray was lovely. Her filmy, sparkling gown was rent and spotted from her falls.

She had taken refuge behind an overthrown table and stood with her revolver ready. Over her head was a drifting cloud of smoke, about her a wild confusion of disordered furniture. A shaft of sunlight played upon her disheveled costume. In the stable, I heard the dogs barking frantically.

So much I observed in one flash—the picture will always be with me as distinct as a photograph—but I had no time to speak, or even to think what I should do next, for, after that momentary pause, she bent forward deliberately and fired at me point-blank.

I felt a sting on my left arm where her bullet grazed, but, without stopping to find whether I was hurt or not, I fired with both pistols at once, and went forward at her. The sound of the double shot in the closed room was terrific. Her eyes, staring

and fascinated, kept on me for an instant as if she were paralyzed, then she screamed again —her voice rivaled the pistol shots—and, suddenly pushing the table with all her might against me, she ran for the door. As she passed, I shot again. The din was maddening.

It was not my intention to finish with her there, though, and again I gave her a chance to escape, driving her before me. As she dashed out she brushed against a framed Madonna upon the wall and it came crashing down. She stumbled on the threshold—I thought she would never get away—and, moaning pitifully, she half ran, half fell down the stairway.

It was a dirty piece of business. I was sickened by it. But, having gone so far, I had no thought of stopping till I had accomplished my object. I gave her a moment's time, therefore, and then, leaving that horrid smoking chaos in her room, I followed her.

She had gone out the front door and

turned the corner of the house, making, by some fatal impulse, for the stable. The barking of the collies had ceased, but as I got to the yard I heard it recommence in a higher and more violent key. It seemed incredible to me that she had sought refuge in the stable, but as I looked, I saw the great door rolled shut. When I came up to it, King came out of his cabin room.

King came out; but he was no longer the smiling, unctuous Celestial I had known. In that yelping, screaming clamor, I stopped to look at him in surprise.

He had fastened the mask upon his head and held the cymbals in one hand. With the other he dragged a package of fire-crackers six feet long, braided together in quadruple rows—there were as many there as in a hundred of the common Fourth-of-July packages. It was such an equipment as the Chinese use for their New Year's Day celebrations.

Before I could speak to him he had thrown the string into an empty barrel and had lighted the fuse. Immediately there was an

uproar like a regiment of infantry firing at will. As soon as this was started, he took up his cymbals and began capering about, clanging them. The barking of the dogs rose frantically.

Surely, if anything could increase her excitement, this grotesque accession would, and I prepared for the last scene. The uproar inside now rivaled King's racket; Edna was screaming for help, and instantly it occurred to me that the dogs, who had always hated her, might be now upon her, and, if I did not act quickly, would tear her to pieces.

I tried the big door; it was held by something inside. Smashing in a window, sash, glass and all, with my naked fists, I climbed in and went through the harness-room to the carriage shed.

There she stood, now disarrayed to a shocking state, her shining golden skirt ripped half off, her bosom bare, her hair streaming. She was driven into a corner and was held there at bay by three snapping, yelping dogs. She had caught up a carriage whip

and was slashing away so savagely that the collies dared not close with her, but I could see that it was only a question of a few minutes before she would collapse.

It was my Joy in face and form, remember! It was her face that was distorted with terror, her form that was draped in glittering rags, it was her voice that rose, shriek on shriek, above the din, till my blood ran cold. It was her voice that screamed to me for help before she was torn to pieces. Its terror will be with me always.

"Oh, help me! Help me!" she cried.

But I steeled myself for the *coup de grâce.* "Break the bone," I muttered, "and let it heal again!"

So I staggered to the great door, slipped the hasp and let in King, prancing, beating his cymbals, droning some savage chant. The sun shone full upon him, glinted on the brass cymbals and illuminated the red and white and black of his atrocious mask. He danced up to her, nearer and nearer. I watched her, spellbound.

Then, as I looked, I saw her face change. Her whip hand dropped, her staring eyes closed. She clutched at her naked breast, tottered and fell headlong, striking her forehead against a carriage wheel as she went down like a golden wave dashing on the shore. I sprang to catch her, just too late. But the next instant I was down on the floor beside her, beating the collies back, protecting her from their teeth by my own body. Even as I did so they drew off, stopped their fierce snarling and lay down, panting, to watch me quietly. How my hopes rose at this! How eagerly I waited for the prostrate form to revive. Outside, the last of the fire-crackers popped at intervals in the smoking barrel.

"Get some water!" I cried to King.

He threw off his mask, and dropped his cymbals with a clanging clash and was off through the big door.

The next moment I looked up from the pale scarred face on the floor, to see Doctor Copin standing at the entrance. Leah, wide-eyed, staring, was behind him.

"What in hell's the matter?" he demanded, and he looked in astonishment at the scene, at the flaccid body in its magnificent disarray, at me holding her passionately in my arms.

I watched her face for the first sign of life, and did not answer him. His presence mattered little, now, in my agonized suspense.

"For God's sake, Castle, what does this mean? Are you all mad? What has happened? What the devil are you doing here, anyway? Let me see to Miss Fielding, please."

I attempted to hold him off with one hand, but he seized me roughly before I was able to resist, and threw me to one side. He dropped to his knees, looked at the face and felt for the pulse. I took my revolver from my pocket and pointed it at him.

"You take your hand off her, or I'll make you!" I cried.

Quick as a flash he turned and looked at me bravely. "Shoot if you dare!" he said. "This is my day, and this is my Miss Field-

ing. I take no orders from you, sir. It's my duty as a physician to revive her. She'll send you packing herself, when she comes to."

I was, after all, so fearful of her condition by this time, that I was glad to take advantage of his skill. It would soon be settled one way or the other, at any rate. So I said:

"All right, then, if she asks me to go, I will. But we'll wait and see."

And so we stood, facing each other, for a tense moment, then turned to her again. King came running in with a basin of water. Leah took it, stooped down and began to sprinkle the pale face.

At that moment I saw Minnehaha look up, and crawl, whimpering, to her mistress' side. Chevalier and John O'Groat followed her. Joy's eyes opened. I sprang to lift her up.

"Edna!" the doctor cried.

"Joy!" I called, myself.

Life came flooding into her face, and I

knew intuitively that it was Joy—Joy illumined, now, in some secret way, by the knowledge of our victory.

"Chester!" She smiled wanly up at me. "Chester, send him away! I want to be alone with you! I have something to tell you!"

"Miss Fielding!" the doctor exclaimed, "I must see you a moment first."

She turned to him and a wave of crimson swept over her cheek.

"I beg your pardon, doctor, I'm no longer Miss Fielding. I'm Mrs. Castle, and I beg you to leave immediately!"

Then, still holding my hand close in hers, she looked up at Leah and drew her down beside us.

"Oh, Leah, dear, we've won! *We've won!*"

THE END

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